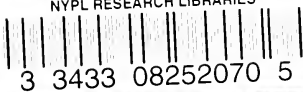


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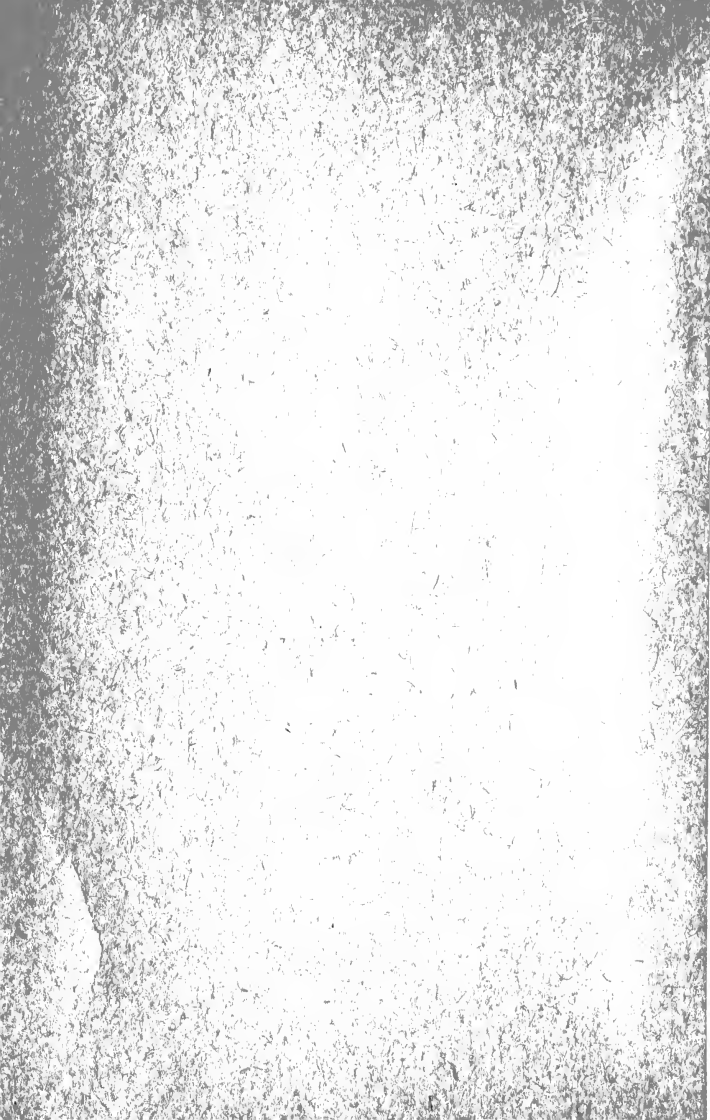


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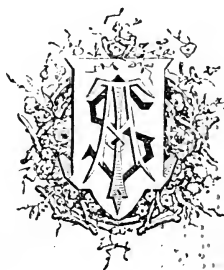
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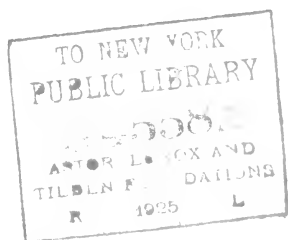
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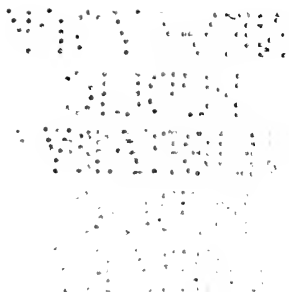
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HER LITTLE WORLD.

CHAPTER I.

“ONE to begin,
Two to show,
Three to make ready—”

shouted Jenny, breaking off suddenly to peep around the posts and down the hall for spies. If she had been a boy, or a small girl, what need she have cared if all the world saw her perched on the back piazza railing prepared for a jump? But she was fifteen and overgrown, and preferred that neither John, the servants, nor the neighbors should see. She would not have minded John yesterday; but there was a coldness between them since breakfast this morning. However, he was not looking; neither was any one else. So with “Four to go!” she jumped the nine feet between her and the ground; and then lay down in the soft green grass,

stretched her long limbs out comfortably, and turned her face up to the sun.

She had not lain there long when she began to meditate on a subject which had given her several seasons of meditation since breakfast, and that was John's speech. For John, on that memorable morning of May the eleventh, had actually made a speech. She laughed aloud when she thought of it. John an orator! She would as soon have expected it of his stuffed owl.

If he had any opinions on animals, or on muscular sports, he could find words, few and pointed, in which to express them; and he had been known to wax eloquent on the one subject of his own arm.

"How's that for an arm, ma'am?" he was accustomed to say to Jenny, baring the ugly member to the shoulder, and doubling it to make the muscle come out in a hill. "Here's where you get your motive power. Don't you weep for the enemy of that arm? Feel of it once. Did you ever touch anything harder? Did you ever see anything prettier?" etc., etc.

But John a moral lecturer! John a holder-forth on such high themes as manners! It was a joke to be preserved in the family.

He had beckoned her solemnly from the dining-room to the library after breakfast, placed chairs with the air of an undertaker, one for her, one opposite for him. Then he had flushed, stuttered, stammered, twisted his thumbs, and said,

"You see, Jen."

"No, I don't see anything," she had replied, as he paused painfully.

"But you will see, Jen, when I have made my points."

"Well, the points! the points!" she demanded, drumming on his knees with her fists.

"There," said he, laying the fists back on her lap, "you have opened the way for me yourself. That is n't ladylike, you know."

"Oh, is that what you are trying to get at?" she said. "You want to tell me I'm not a lady, Johnny dear? Well, out with it and let me go. There's a day with its duties before me. I must away."

"Just hold up," said he, taking the fists again in his own, which were big, bony, and powerful.

"Yes, Jen, that's what I, as an older brother—"

"One year, six days, by the almanac," she interrupted.

"Maybe you think that's polite," said he; "but that's where you and I differ. What I, as an older brother, have been making up my mind for a week to say—"

"Seven days make one week," said she. "You never could do it in that time. Say a month, and proceed."

"Your ways," he continued sublimely, but with a tongue somewhat disturbed, "are n't altogether—that is, you know, the things you do are n't exactly ladylike, you see."

"Bravo!" she shouted. "I call that classic—oratory boiled down. Try it again."

With unruffled amiability he proceeded. "No, Jenny, your ways are not like other girls'."

"You'd better remember who brought me up!" she cried.

"I own I'm to blame," he said, rumpling his hair to collect his scattered points. "I've encouraged you, and not seen any harm in it either, you know, till I had my attention called to it."

Jenny ransacked her brain for the name of the meddler. She knew that John and her most intimate friend had had a serious talk on some mysterious subject not many days ago; and she knew

that that friend was the only person who had ever gravely tried to persuade her to amend her hoydenish ways. So she shouted :

“ Prink ! ”

“ Till I had my attention called to it,” repeated John, once more attacking his hair and blushing as he gazed at a fly on the ceiling.

“ It’s a bad sign when you can’t look me in the eye,” said she.

“ You see, Jen—” said he.

“ You may be excused to write it down,” said she. “ Then commit it to memory, Johnny, and come and recite it, and maybe we’ll get through by Christmas.”

“ You see, Jen,” he roared in a voice of threatening, “ you’re as big as mother.”

“ Eighth of an inch bigger. Be accurate,” said she.

“ And fifteen.”

“ On the thirteenth day of August last.”

“ Now other girls of your age and size don’t jump and climb around the way you do ; and throw ! why, you’re sure death to a chicken, if you take aim. And shoot !—why, there’s hardly a fellow in town can beat you. I say you ought n’t to ;

because, you know, it doesn't make you look the way girls should. It gets your face and hands tanned—"

"Write an article on the tanning effects of shooting, Johnny."

"You know I mean being out in the sun without your bonnet."

"All right. Go on ; it is getting thrilling."

"It spreads you out, you know, and gives you muscle like a boy, and makes your waist big."

"Submitted," said she.

"And, in short, I ought to have put a stop to it before. But, as I said, I never had my attention called to it till lately. It was fun to me ; and as long as we both enjoyed it, I did n't think about the harm it might be doing you. And now, Jenny dear, try and tone down a little, wont you ?"

"Quoted entire from Prinky," said she.

"Bleach out your hands and face, if you can. I do n't mean 'toilettine,' or 'bloom of youth,' but wear bonnets and gloves occasionally. And, Jenny, please do n't let Davies' boys see you jump off the back piazza railing again ; they talk about it."

"And you let 'em !"

"I can't spot my men. It came to me indirectly."

"Through Prink."

"Through your best friend," he said severely. "Some of the fellows say they've seen you shoot nine feet through the air as if you'd been blown out of a gun. And the story was around that you dove from the rocks over the Basin and swam across in three minutes."

"Much obliged for the suggestion," said Jenny. "I'll try it."

"That fable, of course, I nipped in the bud ; it was too idiotic to be believed long, anyway. But there are facts about you, Jen. Lots of people have seen you up trees, and heard you whistling on the streets ; and everybody knows how you vaulted Turner's high fence when the colts were after you."

"I s'pose it would have been more ladylike to stand still and let 'em kick the breath out of me," said Jenny.

"Exercise," said John, "is one of the best educators ; and nobody'll deny that the present generation of girls would be mightily improved by it. But the trouble with you is that you're not satisfied with coming short of a first-class boy. And you know, Jen, all the best authorities are down on that.

Somebody or other, talking about the difference in man and woman, says that he's for

“‘Valor formed ;
For softness she, and sweet, attractive grace.’”

“Who's been stuffing your head with poetry ?”

“I read it.”

“Where ?”

“I—I—do n't exactly know the author,” said John, rather embarrassed by the fact that the letter in which he had read it was at that moment poking a glaring white corner out of his vest pocket.

“Did Prink write it down for you to learn and get off at me ?”

“No, she did n't.”

“Then there's a mystery. There's something besides Prink in it when you deliberately take to learning poetry. I never knew you quote as much as a line from Mother Goose before. Now let go my fists, if you please ; and just tell Prink the next time she wants to call me a tom-boy, to come and do it with her own mouth.”

Then she had risen and stepped loftily away, and gone about the business of the day, sore at heart ; angry, now at John, and now at Prinky, for scheming and plotting about a comrade behind her

back, and sometimes wondering if any one besides Prinky could possibly be in it.

She went into the parlor that morning, opened the blinds, and viewed herself before the long mirror with unprejudiced eyes.

Alas! it was only too true that she had not a waist to be enclosed in a pair of hands. Prink's father's hands could go around her waist and the thumbs lap. Her father, to be sure, quoted Venuses, and called her waist a deformity, but Jenny admired it.

"It would take the hands of the whole family to go around me," thought Jenny.

And her complexion? A face which scorned the protection of hats except on state occasions, which bore the reflected light from a thousand waves through days of fishing, could hardly be soft and fair.

Her height? There was too much of it. "The result of over-exercise," she reflected. "Forced growth."

And her hands? Hands which caught swift base-balls without flinching, which rowed for miles without blistering, which wielded kehoe clubs without aching, could hardly be white and small.

She grew sober as she gazed. She had forgiven John an hour ago. She thought with envy of all her girl friends formed "for softness" and "sweet, attractive grace." She had admired but never envied them before ; for as long as she suited John she suited herself. But John, her only brother ; John, her hero, her comrade, her best-beloved ; John, her brother, sister, father and mother in one—surely he must be pleased. If he wanted her head shaved, shaved it should be ; or her teeth out, out they should come.

So she mentally declared, erect with folded arms before the mirror, scowling scorn at her tanned and overgrown image. She thought of corsets, of a receipt for the complexion she had once noticed in the back of the cook-book ; and she turned away with desperate purposes in her brain.

She climbed no trees, she jumped no heights, she whistled no tunes that morning ; and early in the afternoon she went out, with high resolves and grave intentions, on the back piazza, to meditate upon the change of life she was considering.

Temptation met her. The piazza chairs were hard in the seat and straight in the back ; and one must certainly be comfortable to meditate well.

The grass made a soft couch, and the low limbs of the maple-tree a pleasant canopy. They beckoned her down. But the way of the stairs was dark and roundabout. So she sprang up on the railing, only remembering John's caution in time to make sure that neither he nor the other "Davies boys" next door were looking.

"Now why," thought she, as she lay in the grass, "could n't I have gone around by the stairs like other girls? What is the reason I can never see a high fence without wanting to jump? or a tree without wanting to climb? or a stone without wanting to fire it?" A stone had already crept into her palm, for there was a grave and stately hen marching by with solemn paces.

"Come, biddy, help me out," said she, "or there is no telling what I may be left to do. What is the reason I'm not as others are? To be or not to be a tom-boy? that's the question. Whether 't is better to suffer the slings and arrows of Prink's tongue, or to take arms against my wicked ways, and by opposing end them? You've nothing to say? Prepare for consequences!"

The stone just grazed the tips of the hen's tail-feathers; and she scampered off gayly with such a

sudden downfall of dignity that Jenny laughed loudly.

"There it is again," she thought, sobering suddenly. "I *will* reform. I'll agree to anything John proposes, so long as he'll agree not to talk me over with Prink. I did n't think it of Prink—such an old friend."

Prink, otherwise Miss Margery Barnard, was at that moment ringing the door-bell; and some one shortly brought her out on the back piazza, where Jenny had last been seen.

"Peek-a-boo!" she called in a voice that a certain admirer had compared to the low notes of a canary.

"Oh, halloa!" said Jenny coldly. "Come over, if you want to see me; or, no, come around, I mean. There are stairs, you know."

She took a side look upward to discover the effect of her remark, and she saw pink blushes flickering becomingly on Margery's fair cheeks.

"They never'd show on me at that distance," she reflected, as Margery disappeared. "I might blush for ever and get no credit, with all this tan aboard. Advantages of an untanned skin: good background for all your sensitive and ladylike emotions."

"Well, you found the way," she said, as Margery came out on the grass.

"Oh, yes," she answered, arranging her skirts and taking a seat. "What's the matter, Jenny?"

Jenny, with her eyes on vacancy, her chin in her hands, and her face stony, began to whistle a boisterous air.

"Hurt your feelings, Prink?" she asked suddenly, eying her sternly.

"I have always said you were a lady, anyway," replied Margery, looking back at her with cool dignity.

"Though I was a tom-boy."

"Yes."

"I never thought you'd stoop to stuffing my own brother up against me," roared Jenny.

"I never thought you'd stoop to suspecting me of mean meanings in anything I might say about you," said Margery.

"Perhaps you call it friendly to pick up all the things you hear against one's character, and agree to them, and fill one's own brother's head with them," said Jenny.

"When 'one's own brother' questions and cross-questions you, I don't know what you're going to

do," said Margery, with quivering tones and blurring eyes.

"Did he begin that talk about me, Prinky Barnard?"

"Yes, he did."

"Then there *is* a mystery back of it."

"And when he said we'd help each other put a stop to the talk—and perhaps to the cause of it, Tommy dear—I'm sure I was willing to do my part."

"The world's upside down to-day," said Jenny: "you and John turned backbiters and moral-reformers. There's a grand farce going on. What part'll I take? Let me see. I won't be backbiter; but I declare I'll be moral-reformer too! I'll reform you. We'll have a mutual reform. Halloo! crying? I'll give you two minutes to do it up in."

She ducked her head in the grass, for tears were something she never would look at deliberately, especially when they disfigured the face of a friend.

"What are you whimpering about?" she said, her utterance impeded by the grass which went into her mouth as she opened it. "My sins? If that's all, don't draw on your reservoirs for further

supplies. I'm going to reform. I made up my mind before you came."

"You know that is n't it," said Margery. "I did n't think—that you 'd begin—to suspect me—after so many years—Tommy."

"Oh, I do n't," said Jenny. "I see through it all now. Call that matter settled. But, Prink, if my faults worry you, perhaps yours worry me just as much."

She looked out of one eye to catch Margery blushing. But no blush appeared, and she concluded her hint was not taken.

"You 're blurry yet," she said. "I sha' n't look up till I know you 're through. Come, rally, Prinky, and let me out of this smothering grass. Besides, I want to talk to you when you get your senses back. Tell me when to look."

"I 'm not crying," said Margery. "And, Jenny, I'm sure I know my faults. I do n't deny them. I've let you call me Prink for years, because you say I'm for ever prinking, and have n't any mind above ribbons and ruffles."

"Disown the words!" shouted Jenny. "I never went that far."

"Indeed you did. But never mind. I call you

Tommy, too—pet for tom-boy—so perhaps we're even there."

"Let's talk it out," said Jenny, sitting upright. "I've had a weight on my mind for the last two weeks that I'd like to get rid of. It's queer that just when you and John were planning your attack on me I should be trying to get up my courage to say something to you. Let this be our first grand fight and our last. Let's free our minds once and for all. Say everything you've got to say, Prinky, and I'll do the same by you; and let's for ever after hold our peace. I'll have the hardest of it, see if I do n't, when the time comes. You begin."

"I've nothing more to say, dear, than John said."

"No tender epithets," interposed Jenny, "or I shall break down. I've got a hard duty before me, old girl. You've no idea what I'm going to say to you. Proceed."

"Tommy—"

"No pet names, please—plain Jane."

"Jane, then, I have n't anything to accuse you of except too much tom-boyishness in public. I do n't want you ever to do anything again that will make people call you rough and rude."

“Finis?”

“Not quite. I think it would be better for your own sake if you should take a little more care of your ways and your clothes, Tommy; because you know you’ll be a young lady before long, and it would be very queer for you to go on then the way you do now. I’d like to have you tone down, just for your own sake, Tommy.”

“Granted that I need it,” said Jenny. “What’s more, I’ll do it, and you shall help me. Correct me as much as you please, and I’ll pay attention. Now shut your eyes; it’s my turn.”

“Prinky—no, Margie—you are now sixteen. I have long noticed that there are snares and pitfalls lying in wait for sixteen. Margie, that is the age when girls are tempted to be soft; and the first step downward is love-stories. I caught you slopping that novel with your tears the other day; and besides, I know what it has led to. Margie, you want to be a heroine. Don’t deny it. Maybe you don’t realize it yourself, but I see it. You have dreamy moods, pensive fancies, and poetical thoughts, you know, and no end of sickish nonsense going on in your head. You think it would be beautiful to be engaged to a melancholy youth who rolls his eyes

and waxes his mustache ; and he must have a voice like a turtle-dove's, that melts you to tears. Margie, that is n't the worst of it all. You are not satisfied with keeping the little fellow in your head. You want to see him meandering around the streets, and turning the whites of his eyes up at your window. So you're trying to imagine that Willy Simms, a boy you've played tag with, and studied the primer with, and slapped in the face for stealing your pop-corn, is he. O Prink—excuse me for laughing—but, O Prink, Willy Simms !

“There, I knew you'd cry ! I'll have to turn my back, for I can't waste time going to grass again.

“Cheer up, Prinky ; there's hope for you. It's lucky I've got my eyes open, for your mother is perfectly blind. She'd take you in hand if she suspected. Do you suppose she'd ever let Willy come hanging round, if she thought you considered him anything but a good little simpleton, who ought to be treated kindly, on the same principle that you wouldn't hurt a fly ? She thinks you're both babies, as much as you ever were.

“You see, Prinky, it's lucky we're not all blind. I'm going to mother you through this thing, and

let her live in ignorance. Shall I tell you how I'll do it? Give you the prettiest little pair of kehoe clubs you ever saw—only three pounds to begin with—and train your muscle. It's the surest way to bring up a girl's common sense. I have all the old Greeks to back me. Why, they did n't believe in such a thing as a sound mind in a weak, pale, sickly body. They'd have chucked you in the river without stopping to wink. Now I'm more on their style. I could take my part in the wrestling matches and foot-races with any old Greek woman of them. I know I'm overdone, Prinky. I've owned that, remember. I need toning down, and I'm going to have it. But it's as plain as daylight that you need toning up. Crying yet?"

"No-o-o," answered Margie, with a suspicious tremulousness of tone.

"I've hurt your feelings, I know I have," said Jenny. "But it had to be done. I could n't let you go on this way for ever. You'd have dwindled to a sentimental shadow in six months. Do you own up, Prink? Will you be cured?"

"Ye-e-es," said Margie.

"You're a hero!" shouted Jenny. "A girl that had n't the hero in her could n't have borne

all those charges the way you have, and plead guilty too. Will you begin with the clubs right away, Prinky?"

"Yes, Tommy ; but I must go now."

They rose, and Margie put up her lips. Jenny bent her cheek.

"I suppose I might as well let you go," she said ; "then you can weep it out alone. When you get more muscle you wont cry so much, Margie ; and I'll be glad of that, for I do n't believe tears are healthy, setting aside their other disadvantages. By-by. Remember, you're to tone me down and I'm to tone you up."

CHAPTER II.

“KEEP your heels in line, straighten your knees, turn your toes out ; stand like a soldier, throw out your chest, then lean forward a little, so that your weight will come on the balls of your feet ; keep your head up all the time, and your eyes straight forward, arms close to your sides, elbows in. This is the way to take hold of the clubs, Prinky. Now try and do what I do.”

It was the first lesson. Chairs and tables had been moved out of the way to make a clear arena ; and in it Jenny stood swinging a heavy pair of clubs with careless ease, while Margie, panting under the weight of three pounds, tried to follow her motions.

They were interrupted by the entrance of a small brother with a card in his hand. Margie took it, and let Jenny read over her shoulder the name of William Simms, with his compliments for a concert on Thursday evening. Then she tossed the card on the bureau and the lesson proceeded.

“For bearing twisted joints and lack of breath

without a groan I never saw your equal," said Jenny by-and-by. "But I must n't let you get too tired." She took possession of Margie's clubs. "Here they go in the corner till to-morrow. I'll carry mine home. I want to use them in the morning."

She put on her hat, shouldered the clubs, and walked down the stairs by Margie's side.

"Leave them here, Tommy," said Margie, "and I'll have one of the boys take them over."

"Oh, no need," said Jenny. "I can just as well carry them."

"If I should see a girl who was n't a friend of mine swinging a pair of big clubs through the streets, I'm afraid I'd think uncomplimentary things of her," said Margie. "I'd hate to have any one think such things of you."

"The first step in the right path," said Jenny, dropping them behind the hall door. "Mark it, Prink. Note how gracefully I yield—how gladly I follow duty's call. I'll make a lady yet, perhaps. What do you think?"

"It looks hopeful," said Margie.

She put her arm through Jenny's and held her back a little all the way down the path, watching her lips for something she wanted to hear her say.

But the lips remained closed to the gate, where Jenny said Good-by as if there were nothing beyond that farewell on her mind.

"What about the invitation, Jenny?" said Margie.

"Well, what about it?" said Jenny.

"Shall I accept?"

"Please yourself."

"Are n't you going to advise me?"

"I think not."

"But I want you to."

"Then," said Jenny, crossing her arms on the gate, also crossing her feet, and pushing her hat back as if to free her mind from a weight, "I suppose I must.

"However," she continued, "I'll take a lesson first. Now, Prinky, just fix me in a ladylike posture, wont you? I know this is n't correct. How do you do it? Toes turned out or in? Thumbs pointing east or west? Elbows at an angle or curve? Curves are most ladylike, are n't they? And what'll I do with my hands? They're lions in the way of my reforming. You can't get around those hands. They're big, black, awful facts, not to be trifled with. There was a time I might have

made them what I would; but now, alas, too late, is all my cry."

"I think cold cream and gloves every night would do a good deal," said Margie.

"And would you advise clothes-pins for the joints, or some sort of irons that you could screw down to the proper pressure?" said Jenny.

"They're not a bit too large for your size," said Margie indignantly, snatching one and patting it protectingly. "And see how the fingers taper! They're a lovely shape. All they want is softening and whitening, and they'll be beautiful hands!"

"How's this for an attitude?" said Jenny. "What's the effect of a chin gently reclining on the tip of a forefinger? Do I look becoming? How's my smile—languishing enough? and does it flicker playfully around the right corner of my mouth? or must I smile the other side? Come, fix me for a lady. I want to learn elegant attitudes."

"Just be natural, dear," said Margie.

"Now you throw me back to the bottom of the pit from which you've dragged me," said Jenny. "You couldn't tell me to do a more fatal thing than that."

"Come here, then. But don't stiffen out so. Can't you be limber? I might as well try to bend a wooden doll."

"Must a lady be limber?"

"It is essential," said Margie; and Jenny's bones seemed to go out of her.

Laughing much over her resistless limbs and imbecile expression, Margie turned and bent and twisted until she had made quite a pretty tableau with Jenny and the gate.

"Now I wish everybody could see you. I wish John could see you," she cried.

"Oh, it hurts!" said Jenny. "I feel all out of joint. But I'll try and bear it till I've said what you want. It will be good practice for me, wont it? So it's advice you'll have?"

"Yes, Jenny, I want you to tell me what to do."

"Well," said Jenny, "if he'd invited me—which he would n't—I'd refuse; for it goes against me to see boy and girl babies around together playing they're men and women. I think your fathers and mothers ought to take you to places until you get out of short clothes. That's my view of it. But then it might be as well for you to go with him this once and finish him up."

"I would rather decline than have any quarrel," ventured Margery.

"Of course you would, sweetest of your sex," said Jenny. "I should n't allow a quarrel ; it would be altogether too romantic. What I mean is plain common sense. If you treat him just the way you ought always to have treated him, take my word for it that'll be the end of Willy."

"Treat him how?"

"Will you have my Code of Etiquette for Youth of Opposite Sexes?"

"If you please," said Margie.

"Act as if you were both boys, or both girls—that's all there is of it. Talk to a boy just exactly as you'd talk to a girl—to me, for instance. That wont suit Willy, Prink? Try it and see. Perhaps it will be necessary for you to try it in order to get rid of him. I think, on the whole, you'd better go Thursday evening. It will give you splendid practice to have a last interview with Willy.

"I've stood in this position till I don't believe I'll ever forget it. Wont I astonish John with elegant attitude number one! Can you do it on a chair, Prinky, or do you have to have a gate?"

"You silly old thing!"

"Bring up your muscle well between now and the concert," said Jenny, as she walked off. "Swing the clubs every chance you can get ; and be ready for business Thursday evening."

"I must give her a lesson on dress," thought Margie, watching her as she strode away. "Not a scrap of color about her anywhere. She shall have a scarlet feather. How fearfully her overskirt hangs—every loop out. She must learn that strings are put on overskirts for a purpose, and that ladies pay attention to their strings."

A defect in dress was a serious matter to Margie. It hurt her as much as a defect in any other work of art, or in natural beauty. A robe awry was as painful to her eyes as a blight on a flower. She was a fine artist in her small way. She could not paint pictures, nor mould figures ; but she could make daily pictures of herself for the edification of her family and friends—and all without giving more thought and time to the subject than many a girl gave who looked like a fright after all her pains.

People who were not educated to an appreciation of her details felt the influence of her general effect, and wondered, John among the number, why their daughters or sisters could not give them as

much pleasure in as simple a way. Her face did not mar the prettiest effects she could achieve, for it was always amiable; it was delicate in outlines and tints, and had a peaceful expression which was comfortable to see.

She enjoyed an artistic and becoming suit as she enjoyed the lilies and roses in the garden, or the pictures in the parlor. But nevertheless she sometimes felt that this good gift of hers, this happy possession which gave pleasure in her home, was a sin; for Jenny once in a while called her Prink in serious earnest, and accused her of making an idol of her wardrobe.

She felt particularly guilty all day Thursday to be considering what she should wear that evening. Jenny would tell her that on a night when she had stern duty to do she should be stern in attire, foregoing all the little vanities and trifles of toilet that would be more pardonable on another occasion.

But she had a lovely little new bonnet, which some one—was it Willy?—had said looked like a cloud just settling on her head; and towards that bonnet her thoughts all day went tenderly roaming. What should she wear with it? What would be

most harmonious and overpowering with it? The merits of pink and blue, of gold and coral earrings, of gloves in the lightest shades of gray and brown, fairly persecuted her, and forced her to retire often to her room to swing her clubs and strengthen her mind.

She wanted to see Jenny before the evening. She needed the tonic of her presence. Jenny could nerve her for anything. But the evening came and no Jenny had appeared.

It came soft and hazy, with a mellow sky and a sweet, languid air. Margie almost forgot in the softness of the evening the harshness of Jenny's warning, and her own need of rescue from the perils of sentimentality. They entirely slipped from her memory for one comfortable moment as she stood in the doorway—as pretty a picture as doorway could frame—waiting.

It was not because she was waiting for Willy that the situation pleased her. She was under the influence of all the novels she had read for a year, steeped in their sentiment; and she had learned nothing from them if not this: that to be waiting for somebody in one's most becoming robes, in one's doorway, under the softest of evening skies, and in

the sweetest of evening airs, is an interesting situation.

But, after all, it was only natural that a small portion of the interest belonging to the situation should fall upon the somebody who was coming to be its hero ; so it happened that when little Willy walked briskly up the path Margie's heart beat not unkindly towards him.

No sooner had they said Good evening, however, than she remembered that Jenny had spoken of him as a "melancholy man ;" and being a natural student of causes and effects in personal appearance, she began to look for the causes of his melancholy aspect. She was triumphant when she discovered them in an unusual height of forehead and length of chin.

And he did roll his eyes ! Yes, the pupils went sailing from bound to bound of the whites, as he solemnly informed her that it was a pleasant evening.

And what a neat little mustache it was, to be sure ! So carefully waxed and curled !

Even the turtle-dove tones were Willy's. But instead of moving Margie to the vicinity of tears, she nearly exploded with laughter when he spoke of the weather in accents grave and low.

He seemed a caricature on Jenny's caricature of him. He was something more absurd even than the Willy who stole her pop-corn. All the dreams and fancies went out of her head, all the sentiment out of the evening air. She wondered how she ever for one moment in her imagination could have let Willy play hero to her rôle of heroine. And she was so inclined to laugh in his face that she excused herself and went up stairs to put on her bonnet.

It took a long while to put it on, especially as she pulled it off and put it on again frequently, merely for the amusement of occupying as many minutes as possible. When she reappeared down stairs there was no time for lingering in the porch, and arm and arm in the twilight hero and heroine set forth.

"Since a heroine I was bound to be, and a hero I must have, this," thought Margie, "is the consequence. Where, oh where are your killing eyes gone, Willy, and your melting tones and fascinating melancholy? It's queer how, to-night, you're only the little Willy Simms who used to go to Miss Dobbins' school."

Regarding him as that small child, she suddenly remembered what had never occurred to her during

their heroic period: how, although she was not very good at outdoor sports, she always used to catch him at a game of tag; how she invariably held out longest at Hop-on-One-Foot; and often snatched and took him captive when they played Prison.

And she remembered—oh, saddest memory of all!—that Willy on being captured would sometimes express regret by such unmanly things as tears. Alas! she well remembered that she had many a time made one of a cruel crowd who pointed the forefingers of scorn at him, calling him cry-baby, and mockingly proposing that he should run and tell his mother, in allusion to an unpopular custom which he had.

How was it, she wondered, that of all her acquaintances little Willy, with the rolling eyes and neat mustache, happened to be her hero? And the humiliating answer quickly came from her own brain that the boys who weren't cry-babies, who did n't tell their mothers, nor let girls beat them at games, were just the boys to decline being sentimental heroes on demand. She fancied John playing hero for her—big, rough, sensible John; and she laughed aloud at the absurdity of the idea. So

loud was her laugh, so sudden, and so uncalled for by any remark of Willy's, that he jumped.

"Did I frighten you?" said she. "I was laughing at something I was thinking about. What were you saying? I beg your pardon. I was thinking of something."

"I said," said Willy—and being agitated he seemed to squeak. Could those be the turtle-dove tones?—"I said," said he, "that it was a pleasant evening. Do you not find it so?"

"Oh, yes," said Margie, having a decided impression that they had settled that question before.

There was something the matter, Willy did not know what, but things were not gliding along as smoothly as usual. There was a rough, commonplace air about everything, which he could not understand.

The trouble could not be with this fair, soft, pretty creature beside him, whose kind and gentle ways had been leading him to congratulate himself for the last fortnight that he had found a kindred spirit.

The trouble certainly was not with the evening. That was all that could be desired as to atmosphere, and the sky was perfect.

There was going to be a crescent moon too, by-and-by, when they came home ; and he had a pretty fancy about the crescent to get off. But, although a striking thought, well put, seemed to be needed at present, he would not be premature. He would try the effect of a persuasive, personal question.

"May I ask," said he, in his mellowest tones, "why you are so silent this evening?"

Margie reflected a moment. She was under orders from Jenny to talk to him just as if he were one of her sex ; and she thought it probable that if a girl had asked the question, she would answer it truthfully. So she answered Willy truthfully, and in a clear, matter-of-fact tone, that grated on his ears,

"I was thinking about the time you stole my pop-corn, and I slapped you in the face, and you ran and told your mother," she said. "Do you remember?"

The question was a blow. Willy staggered under it. Margie felt him quivering on her arm, and feared for a moment that he was going to cry, as of old.

But he rallied, and laughed. It was not exactly a merry laugh ; but it served to show that he appreciated the humor of her abrupt remark.

When at last he spoke, it was to say, "Do you think I could forget old times in which we played a mutual part, Miss Margie?"

Before Margie could frame an appropriate answer they reached the hall; and after they came out she only wanted to get home as fast as possible, to get rid of Willy, and forget from that night that there ever had been or could be such things as heroes and heroines in the world.

It dawned upon Willy as they walked on that the trouble was with Margie, and he felt that it was his fate to be disappointed in those whom he fondly trusted. But he hoped much from that fancy of his about the crescent; and he waited and waited till they reached the gate for an opportunity to bring it in naturally.

The distance and coldness between them increased each moment. It grew harder after every remark for him to speak again. He would gladly have said good-night at the gate and taken his departure. But really that was a pretty idea of his about the crescent. He could not afford to waste the delicate fancy. He must not lose this last chance to be reconciled. He must not turn coldly away when perhaps golden speech would save all.

"Did you ever notice, Miss Margie," he said, with a desperate gasp, "that the crescent moon seems to hold the form of a reclining girl—young lady? She seems to be passing away; sitting up on her couch with head lying back and hands clasped. See, can you not almost trace the outlines of her pale form?"

It was more disgust with herself for ever having listened seriously to such talk as this, than disgust with the poor little fellow's simplicity, which made her answer sharply,

"Is it a conundrum? I give it up."

"I beg your pardon," she added quickly. "I did n't mean to be rude."

"We have misunderstood each other," he said magnificently. "Good evening."

It was a last farewell from her first and last hero, she felt; and with a sigh of relief, and a sigh for follies departed, she went in—a wiser and more sensible girl.

CHAPTER III.

"SHE can't bear him," said Jenny, tossing her braids back, and looking up at John from the floor, where she sat hugging her knees.

"I saw her hanging on his arm, perfectly moon-struck, last night, going home from the concert," said John, looking down from the bed where he sat cleaning a gun.

"I've seen her since then. She stopped in this morning on her way to school, and I *know* she dislikes him."

"Before I'd have such a soft for a friend!"

"She is n't half as soft as a shadow," said Jenny. "Before I'd have a shadow for a friend! You don't make me believe there's any such boy as Bob Hall of Barnaby, till I've seen him. He's always dodging and skulking out of my way like a shadow: in the house for weeks till he hears I'm coming home, then off on the lightning express the minute he gets the news: my own brother's most intimate friend for four months; only three hours

away by steam-cars ; always in town when I'm out of it ; never by any accident in it when I'm in it. Do n't try to tell me that Bob ever lived except in your dreams, Johnny. He's every inch a Dream-boy, and never'll be more nor less."

"Wait till you see his muscle once," said John.

"Well, have n't I waited and waited and waited ? Look here, Johnny, I'm open to conviction yet. Bring him down within a week and I'll believe."

John began to whistle.

"That's a guilty whistle," said Jenny. "You can't produce him. He is n't visible to the naked eye. Give me a girl who goes with Willy Simms instead of a shadow-friend. I've got it !" she shouted ; "he's deformed. He has a hump on his back, or a twist in his eye, or his nose is put on crooked. You don't want me to see him. But I'll be all the kinder to him on that account. Bring him on, Johnny. Send for him to-day, and I'll treat him like a prodigal son."

"Much obliged," said John ; "but he happens to be one of the best-looking fellows of my acquaintance."

"Johnny," she asked, as a last hope, "is he bashful ?"

"Not a bit of it."

"Then there's only one other explanation. He has personal objections to me. He hasn't seen me, and I don't suppose you'd prejudice him against me; so it's jealousy—pure jealousy—just what I've suspected."

John laughed, but scorned to answer.

"You've never been quite so well suited with me since you got intimate with him," said Jenny. "Nobody's right except him. Margie's too soft, I'm too hard. I'm your big bear, she's your middle-sized bear; but he's your little bear that's always 'just right.'"

"Hand us a clean rag," said John.

Jenny passed it up, and as he took one end, she held the other firmly till he looked at her.

"He's a naughty Dream-boy, Johnny," she said, "to come between you and me."

"Idiocy!" said John. "I'd like to see the individual that could come between you and me."

"Then what's the mystery, Johnny? Who opened your eyes to my faults? Who's been making you dissatisfied with me, if not the Dream-boy?"

"Can't you believe that it's possible for me to

take an interest in your improvement on my own account?"

"Oh, yes, after you get it through your head that I need improving. But how did that idea work its way into your brain? That's the question I'm interested in. You see you've always maintained, John, that my style was the Greek style, the best style, and the only style for a girl. So I've gone on getting rougher and rougher, not minding Margie's hints and appeals, and mamma's sarcasms. All I cared for in the world was to suit you."

"Then all you care for in the world now ought to be to suit me."

"So it is," said Jenny, embracing his nearest boot. "True as I live, sure as my name's Jane Stephens, I care for nothing but to please Johnny best. Look here, and I'll tell you a secret."

John looked down.

She laid her thumb on her lap with the word "Corsets;" her forefinger beside it with "Tan-eradicator;" her middle finger followed with "Gloves and cold cream;" the third followed that with "Strict attention paid to buttons and strings;" and the little finger came down last, with the triumphant shout, "A lady!"

"You're a duck," said John.

"Who was it waked you up, Johnny?" she asked, pursuing her advantage as quickly as possible.

"I hope I'm capable of waking myself up," said John, with sudden sternness.

"But that's just what you're not, you know," said Jenny sweetly. "As many years as we've been acquainted, Johnny, I never knew you to wake yourself up. You can't even do it mornings. Don't I have to bang on your door regularly seven times a week, and sometimes resort to ice-water and red-hot pokers? Revolutions don't sprout in your brain, Johnny. It's a jog-trot brain; and I say it never, never, never came into your head without help that I needed reforming. Prink's mild hints could n't have done it either, and of course not mamma. It's the Dream-boy; and jealousy drove him to it.

"There's no use in your telling me he's above such a feeling as jealousy. He may be the noblest Dream-boy in the world; but he could n't help being jealous of me if he liked you. I used to despise jealousy, you know, and think it only belonged to small natures; but I'm in a continual ferment

of it since the Dream-boy's shadow darkened my pathway and came between you and me."

"Don't talk that stuff any more," thundered John. But his voice softened as he took the top of Jenny's head in his hand, shook it roughly, and said, "I'll have to waste a few words on you."

He leaned over her and laid a hand on each shoulder, looking seriously into her upturned face.

"We've joked a good deal about Bob," he said; "but I'm not so thick-headed that I can't see when you're in dead earnest. You *are* jealous of him. You're actually afraid I think as much of him as I do of you. Now I want you to understand, once and for all, that even if he is the first fellow I've ever cared much about, and though I do think he's the best fellow going, I want you to understand that he, or any one else, can never come between you and me. We've gone through too much together, chicken."

His clasp on her shoulders tightened, and there was a very pleasant look in his big, steady blue eyes—a look which Jenny, familiar with all his looks, knew meant a great deal.

"Don't ever do such a silly, silly thing as to get jealous of me again, Jenny. You're my sister. I

can't say anything more than that. It means more than anything else to me. I can't think of anything better than you can put in that word."

The shining of Jenny's eyes was something radiant to see as she answered and thanked him without speaking. It would probably have occurred to a spectator at that moment that there was more between them than just the relation of brother and sister; and what it was their next words told.

"Yes, papa Johnny," said she.

"All serene, little mother," said he.

Those were the names they had given each other in their times of childish need, when they played father and mother to each other, comforting and helping, advising and controlling with a wisdom sharpened by their necessities.

Their father died when they were three and four. They missed him as a playfellow, a champion, and a lover; and they learned to comfort each other after they lost him, for their mother had time only to comfort herself. And even that she failed to do. So she went cruising after comfort. She went to the city, to the mountains, to the seashore, and then over the sea.

There was a competent housekeeper at home,

and various nurses, governesses, and tutors came and went, while she tried foreign comforts for six years.

She was a dear mother all those years—a sweet, pretty mother, who was coming home some sunny summer day to take them up in her lap and pet them, and tell them how she had loved and missed them day and night, day and night, for six long years. They had endless gentle fancies about her; and sometimes, when they saw other children cuddled and caressed, not to be outdone, and to keep up their own hearts, they boasted of what was theirs in those pink and blue countries which they had hunted out and marked in their geographies.

She had a rough passage over the sea when she came home. The winds and waves were against her, the din and heat of New York were against her, and the journey in the cars—hard seats, soot, and cinders—were against her. The throbbing of her head was against her, the dust in her garments, the jarring her nerves had had, and the untidy aspect of the children, who had beguiled the time of watching by gymnastics on the front gate.

They were full of their mother, so full that they could not speak, as they clung and clasped and

kissed her, on her hands or skirts, wherever they could reach. But she was full of her headache, and her weariness, and the trials of her journey. She kissed the rough, untidy, sunburnt children with a mouth that did not smile, and embraced them with arms that did not draw them close nor hold them warmly.

And she did not take them up in her lap at all, nor tell them anything about hours when she had missed them, and sent her love to them across the sea.

Perhaps she was not strong enough to hold such big, stout children; and perhaps talking tired her. She might be better in the morning. She was well enough to take a drive in the morning, to hold a consultation with the housekeeper, and to receive a visitor, but not to tell them, with her arms around them, what they were waiting to hear.

Every rising sun renewed Jenny's hopes for a few days; but days came and went, and still her mother had done nothing more than give them morning and evening greetings, and hear occasional brief reviews of their customs in her absence.

So Jenny learned by-and-by to expect disappointments for her hopes.

And yet sometimes, when her mother went

away, she was foolish enough to fancy her the pretty, tender mother who had been beyond the sea. The illusion had lived so many years in her imagination that it seemed as if her patient faith could not have been quite unfounded ; and she had a way, in her dreams and in her mother's long absences, of making real to her heart the fancy that had comforted her lonely childhood.

Mrs. Stephens had roamed too much, and reigned in too many places, to settle down to a narrow circle of admirers in a little country town. Her nerves did not grow strong with years, and she began to search for health as she once searched for comfort, becoming in due time violently addicted to water-cures.

So John and Jenny had drawn very near through her distance, and for what they missed in her had found all the more in each other.

"I'll never be jealous again," said Jenny, "even of him. But my brain will puzzle over his behavior, in spite of me. Now doesn't it look to an unprejudiced person as if he wanted to avoid me? You are for ever going over to Barnaby to spend a night or day ; but he never comes here in that way. He never comes at all except when I'm safely out

of the way. It was so queer how he paid up some of your little visits in one long one that fortnight I was at Aunt Julia's."

"I had him stay with me because I was so awfully lonesome. I do n't see any particular mystery in that."

"But what did he go flying off for the day before I got back?"

"He could n't stay for ever. He might naturally think that I'd want to devote all my time to you after you'd been gone so long."

"I do n't see why you don't have him come down and spend Sunday with you some time, when I'm so anxious to see him."

"Do stop talking about him," said John; "I'm sick of the subject. I ask as a special favor, Jen, that you'll drop him and all that talk about him. Will you? I'm in earnest. I want you to make me a promise to that effect. I do n't see any sense in your bothering your head so much about my motives, and imagining all sorts of mysterious reasons why I want you to improve. It is natural enough that a brother should want his sister to act like a young lady when she's getting to be one. I do n't believe I'd be thrown into such a commotion

if you asked me to change my ways. I think I'd go ahead and do it."

"So you would, Johnny. It would be just like you. But you have n't any ways to change," said Jenny, rather sadly. "You're a born gentleman. I sometimes think I'm not a born lady."

"I'd like to hear any one else make that little statement about you," said John.

"I s'pose I'd fly into an angry passion and demand an explanation, would n't I?"

"If you left any eyes in his head I'd be thankful."

"But, Johnny, between you and me, I feel discouraged this morning," said Jenny. "Prink's been at me about my clothes, and she sweetly insists that I shall learn the mysteries of tapes. I should think those old logarithms you hate so could n't be harder for you than tapes for me. The dressmaker puts 'em on my overskirt by the dozen, you know, out of pure spite; and they all wind in and out of each other, and cross and criss-cross in a regular labyrinth, each one seeking its mate; for they belong in pairs, and if the right two don't get together there's the mischief to pay."

"Drop that expression."

"Accept the amendment, Johnny. You may beat me if you hear me say a slang word to-day. Well, then, if the right two don't get together there's—there's—an embarrassment. Now look at me."

She jumped up and stood on exhibition. A white pin was visible in the ruffle of her black underskirt, where a rip had taken place yesterday. The fulness of her overskirt, intended to be confined to the rear, being set free from tapes, fell in front. Her boot gaped where three buttons were missing. Her hair, which hung down in a long, heavy, black braid, looked rumpled and wild from the curly crown of her head to the end of the braid. There was no fault to be found with her attitude, for she was straight and full-chested, and her clubs had given her ease of motion and grace of posture; but the general effect was painful, and John, viewing her critically, asked in accents of despair,

"Do you suppose anything could be done? Do you think Margie could teach you?"

"There's something positively pathetic in your tones," said Jenny. "Teach me! Why, I can learn alone, to please you. I can master even tapes for you. Your tones went right to the softest spot in

my heart. Johnny, I'm going away this minute to begin my dress-reform."

"How proud I'll feel," said John, "when you get over being 'sloppy.'"

"Sloppy!" said Jenny. "That's a new word you've picked up. Now I'd just like to know where you got it."

To her surprise John colored deeply, and hastened to correct the expression :

"How proud I'll feel to see you trim and in shape, like Margie."

"That marvel you shall soon behold," said Jenny. "I'll take this boot to Miss Goodrich the first thing I do, and have the buttons on."

"Why don't you sew 'em on yourself?"

"Think I can't read the signs of the times? Always take your boots around after a letter, Johnny. She'll do anything on top of a letter."

"Did she get one from him this morning?"

"Saw Michael bring it up with my own eyes."

She dropped on the floor in a heap, unbuttoned and pulled off her boot, rose, and ran away.

She was obliged to stand in the front hall and shout, "Miss Goodrich! Miss Goodrich!" at the top of her voice, before she succeeded in finding her.





Then an answer came sharply from the parlor, "What do you want?"

"Who ever thought of finding you in here?" said Jenny. "I'd as soon look for a friend in a sepulchre as in these musty, dark old rooms. What's up?"

"Your mother's coming home to-morrow."

"That's the letter you got this morning," said Jenny. "Well, I suppose it's a good thing to have mamma come around once in a while, so as to give the house a dusting."

"If you have any complaints to make of my housekeeping, please present them to your mother," said Miss Goodrich haughtily. "There are other houses to keep."

"So you've mentioned before," said Jenny. "But don't be mad at me, Goody, because I want you to do me a favor. See there."

"You'll have to sew them on yourself," said Miss Goodrich. "My hands are full to-day. Your mother sent a string of orders as long as the moral law."

"But I can't sew on shoe-buttons, Goody. I don't know how. It makes me paw the air to think of it. I believe I'm going to cry. Come, Goody

dear ; I've got a very, very particular reason. Wont you, please ?”

“No, I wont—there ! I can't do everything.”

She slammed down a chair, and Jenny went out and slammed the door.

But she came back and opened it, and closed it very softly. Then she went away smiling like a pleased baby, to think what she could do for John's sake.

Her mind did not rise to the idea of sewing on shoe-buttons for his sake until she was up stairs ; but on the top stair she thought of it, and she stood still to consider it. She had never undertaken it but once, and then the effect upon her temper had been so serious, and her defeat so ignominious, that she had never meant to undertake it any more. But perhaps she could do even that for him !

She was in the habit of abiding Miss Goodrich's time, and as long as her mood was unpropitious went buttonless. But she would have to go buttonless all day to-day ; and she had meant to appear before John tidy and shapely that very morning, in promise of the total reform that was to be.

She walked slowly down the hall, thinking. She passed her own door. She passed John's door

softly, lest he should hear and summon her, for her courage was rising, rising bravely to the magnitude of the undertaking.

She walked on, and she opened the door that led into another passage, and she went to the end of that passage, and she opened Miss Goodrich's door.

She crossed the room to the work-basket, slowly and gravely as became the dignity of the occasion. She found a paper of needles and a spool of linen thread and a thimble, and three round, black, hideous, malign-looking buttons in a little button-bag; and then she retraced her steps.

She went into her own room and locked the door, for no one should witness her conflict, nor her defeat, if defeated she was to be by shoe-buttons once more. She sat down at the window with all her foes in martial array on the sill, and she drew a long breath before the battle.

After that she threaded an enormous needle, took the boot in her lap and proceeded to bring boot, thread and needle together. All went well till the eye met the leather. It had taken vigorous pushing to get the needle through up to the eye, but farther than that it positively would not go. She

brought all the strength of her strong right arm to bear on it. Go through it would n't, but break it did at last, not, however, without slipping back and pricking her finger. The blood spirted out in an ugly, dark red, little jet. She ground her teeth together to keep back an unlady-like remark which she wished to address to it briefly and pointedly.

After that she went to what she considered a safe extreme, by taking out of the paper a slender needle with a delicate eye and an accommodating look.

Patiently—patiently for John's sake—though cold perspiration stood on her forehead, she tried once, twice, three, four, five, six, no end of times to bite, to squeeze, to twist the end of her linen thread small enough to go through the eye.

And she succeeded at last! She folded her hands peacefully in her lap. She was very glad she had been patient. She thought she would always be patient after that. Patience, she reflected, was its own reward.

Once more needle and leather met. But trouble was not yet over, and this time trouble lay at the other end, for the fine point yielded, bent and broke before going in at all. Point or no point, in her

anger she pushed it on ; and it broke again in the middle.

That was a turning point in Jenny's reform. She felt the crisis upon her. She was provoked, discouraged, and helpless. She got up and walked to the door.

But, oh, to be conquered by three little shoe-buttons ! The ignominy of it ! And John ! She went back. She sat down again. She tried needle after needle, until in process of time she reached the right one. Then success seemed to smile on her. The victory seemed sure.

Her thread was double and as long as her arm, for she meant that it should serve for all the buttons.

How easily and smoothly needle and thread went through the leather and through the button's eye. She drew the thread out full length, stretching her arm to its utmost to do it ; and brought the needle back. But on its return half the thread fell in with its other half, and they entered into combination, twining and twisting and knotting together in many a bewildering and maddening entanglement.

She put her head down in her lap. She could

almost have cried. She knew now what nerves were, the fidgety kind. She had learned the meaning of that hitherto mysterious word, "unstrung." She thought she would never make fun of nerves any more.

But by-and-by she sat up bravely, took the same needle and a short thread, and began all over again.

In ten minutes victory was hers!

CHAPTER IV.

SHE tossed the boot up in the air; she caught it in her arms as it fell, and hugged it; then she put in her foot.

Whirling around before the glass she got a glimpse of her rumpled hair, and snatched the brush and a dressing-sack and went briskly to work, jerking through tangles without any regard to sensation. She wondered why her hair could n't have grown nice and smooth and thin, like other girls'. She failed to see the advantages of having your own hair. She thought it was much neater to take it off at night, as you did your clothes, and put it on fresh in the morning. But while she reflected she made her braid smooth, except here and there where a mischievous little curl went astray. Then she stirred up a drawer of ribbons till out of the chaos she disentangled one suitable to tie it.

After that she sat down on the edge of the bed to consider her dress. She investigated her whole stock in the closet, and found so many spots and

rips and tears that she concluded her easiest course was to mend the one she had on. That was speedily done. A bottle of benzine and a sponge were brought from Miss Goodrich's room, and the spots attacked and forced to retreat.

She dove into the ribbon-drawer again, and brought forth, after various upheavals, a tie for her neck to match the ribbon on her hair—scarlet, the color John liked best for her.

Then there were only the strings. She turned up the overskirt. She revolved before the glass. She fastened a pair of strings together; but it was evident from the twist which the skirt immediately took that they were not destined to be partners.

"Goody will have to help me out of this," she said, unlocking her door.

She found her again in the parlor.

"Tie me up behind, please, Goody," said she. "That wont take you long. There's a dear."

"Long or not," answered Miss Goodrich, "I'm too thankful to hear you ask such a thing to refuse you. How neat and nice you look, Miss Jenny; but you smell as if you'd tumbled in a tub of benzine. Hold up this overskirt while I see if I can find the strings.

"There now, you look like other folks. It does my eyes good to see you in shape."

"Many thanks," said Jenny, running to the mirror. "It didn't take you long, did it? Don't I look nice? Isn't it funny, Goody, that it should make any difference whether your overskirt sticks out in one place or another? Now I should think a puff in front, or on the sides, would be just as good as a puff in the back, should n't you?"

"I suppose you're trying to get straightened out for your mother," replied Miss Goodrich. "I do n't know what she'd say if she saw the state all those handsome dresses of yours are in."

"She'd say you ought to mend them. What an awfully big waist I've got, have n't I, Goody?"

"There *is* a difference in waists," said Miss Goodrich, glancing approvingly down at her own scant proportions. "See if you can't keep from getting out of kilter till to-morrow noon, Miss Jenny. Do n't go capering round and tearing yourself to pieces again before your mother gets here."

"No, I wont, Goody," she answered meekly. "Do corsets hurt much?"

"Who said they hurt?"

"Oh, I do n't mean yours. I was thinking of

getting some for my own particular use. What size should you suppose I'd need?"

"Let me see. Mine are nineteens. Twenty; twenty-one; twenty-two"—her ideas growing as she gazed.

"You need n't trouble yourself to go on to a hundred," said Jenny. "I'm not a hogshead, quite."

She ran away for her hat, but went first to show herself to John.

"Look!" said she, throwing open his door and standing there.

He turned, looked, laughed, and clapped his hands.

"I want lots of praise, Johnny," she said. "I've been the goodest girl I ever was. Do you see that boot? I did it! It was an ordeal, I can tell you. I was afraid my hair'd turn gray in an hour. People's hair does sometimes, you know, with such experiences. Don't laugh, Johnny; praise me. Give me a laurel crown. I've learned how to be patient to-day; and I'll need patience more than anything else in the grand reform I'm going to get up for you. You ought to help shout my victory over shoe-buttons."

"I believe you're sober," said John, as she came and sat beside him and looked in his eyes gravely. "Whew! benzine!"

"Yes, there's plenty of benzine about me," said Jenny. "But you can't find any grease-spots, Johnny Stephens. Sober! Of course I am. I tell you those shoe-buttons were a turning-point in my career; and nobody has such cause to be thankful for it as you. Do you think I look very nice, Johnny?"

"You look like a fashion-plate!" declared John emphatically, "with the smirk left out, you know, and the nose turned up a little."

"It's a pity about my nose," said Jenny. "I don't know why they don't get out a patent nose-straightener, instead of wasting all their time on steam-engines and sewing-machines. I'm going now, Johnny. Do n't praise me *very* much till I get back from the drygoods store and the druggist's. You'll want all your best adjectives then."

"Do you know that you slipped off without making me that promise I wanted?" said John.

"What—about the Dream-boy? It was n't pre-meditated. Have it now, Johnny? Here's my hand. I promise. By-by.

"O Johnny"—putting her head back in the door—"can you lend me a dollar?"

"You do n't mean to say that last is all gone."

"Yes, dear. Oh, do n't ask any questions, please."

"No need of questions," said John. "It's given some scamp another spree. Charity, as I've told you before, is all very well; but when it comes to encouraging vice, that's another thing. How many loafers, masculine and feminine, are there that depend on you for their regular drinks, do you suppose?"

"Fifty cents, please, Johnny, and I wont ask you again."

"You'll find a dollar in my purse in the top drawer," said John. "I ought n't to give it to you, Jenny. It's ruining you."

"I would n't ask it, ducky," said Jenny, scampering across the room to get it, "but it's towards the reform. It's for tan. There's a splendid recipe in the cook-book, and I'm going to have the druggist put it up for me. Sure you can spare a dollar!"

She had it already safe in the depths of her pocket.

"If you give that to a beggar I wont give you another cent, that's all," said John. "You're not fit to be trusted with a penny. You ought to have a special guardian appointed."

He shouted the last word after her, for she was rapidly increasing the distance between them by flying leaps down the stairs. With the cook-book under her arm, and her face set steadily toward the druggist's, she hurried on, looking neither to the right hand nor the left for beggars.

"Put that up for me, please," said she, laying the cook-book open on the counter.

"Use it with care," said the man, when he brought back a bottle. "Read the directions for applying."

"What can I show you, miss?" asked the next salesman whom she approached, in the drygoods store across the street.

"Corsets," said Jenny.

"What size?"

She reflected that she ought to buy the size she wished to be, not the size she was at present. She thought she would like to be a little larger than Miss Goodrich; so she called for "Twenty," had them charged, and took them home

She was very impatient to see her new complexion. She felt as if a miracle were going to be wrought on her ; as if she had only to apply and become at once soft and fair. But the cook-book decreed that the wash should be used "on retiring." So she put the bottle away, and the complexion out of her thoughts, till night ; then devoted all her mind to corsets.

They needed it all, for they gave her a great deal of trouble, with their perplexing strings, and their fastenings that would n't fasten.

She had to draw in her breath and hold it while she went through the operation of getting them together ; and they pinched her so when it was done, that it seemed as if her eyes were going to pop out of her head. She could not bend right nor left, forwards nor backwards. She seemed to be done up in irons that were screwing her down to a smaller size each moment.

How long she bore it by the clock she could not tell, for she was too much engaged with the torture to take any note of time. She walked the floor, and she groaned inwardly. Once she groaned audibly. But why should she be conquered by corsets any more than by buttons ?

Margie came into her mind as a hope. It seemed as if she could help her. She looked at the clock, saw that it was almost twelve, and seized her hat and flew. It had been dark all the morning, and was raining lightly now; but she did not give a thought to umbrella and rubbers.

She had to wait at the Seminary gate several minutes, pacing up and down, in her whalebone bonds, like a caged lion.

"You naughty girl," said Margie, when she came out, taking her under her umbrella. "Your shoulders are wet, and your feet too, aren't they?"

"Oh, a little," said Jenny. "But that's nothing to—"

"It's a great deal," said Margie, "when you have such terrible colds. Don't you remember how sick you were last spring, with your mother away?"

"Yes, and what a mother your mother was to me. I'm not likely to forget it," said Jenny.

"And you can't be too careful," said Margie. "You must run right home and put on dry things, dear. It's a serious matter for you to get wet feet."

"Oh, I tell you wet feet are nothing, colds are

nothing, nothing's nothing to the torment I'm in," said Jenny. "Margie, is my face turning black? I feel as if my very soul had been driven up to the top of my head."

"What is the matter?"

"Corsets!"

"You don't mean to tell me that you, of all girls in the world, are laced?"

"Yes, I am. Didn't you want me to reform? Did n't you say my waist was tremendous?"

"Never! It's your own ridiculous idea. It's just right for your height. Father and mother hope that your clubs will make mine more like it. I do think, for a clever girl, Tommy, you have the least common sense about some things. How perfectly silly it was in you! Our baby would have known better. Run home and pull them off before they kill you. And if I'm going to reform you, I'll give my own orders after this, please."

Jenny darted away through the rain, and did not stop till she was in her own room, and the agony was removed.

She remembered Margie's warning, but it did not make such an impression that she changed either dress or shoes. Occasionally during the

afternoon uncomfortable little chills ran up and down her back, and there were a few threatening sneezes, which, in the light of former sad experiences, she ought to have heeded.

She went to bed earlier than usual, for she was very impatient to put on the new complexion. She found that she had left the cook-book down stairs, but she was too tired to go for it, and was sure that she remembered all it said.

Obedying it so far as to close her eyes, she poured into her hands the strong lotion, advertised to remove "tan, freckles, and all unsightly spots," dashed it over her face, and rubbed it in well. The only part of the instructions which she had forgotten was that the wash should be lightly applied with a soft rag, and kept at a safe distance from the eyes.

She was surprised at the smarting of her whole face, but particularly at the smarting of her eyes, for she did not think any of it could have gone in, although, to be sure, she had felt a few drops plashing up on the lids.

According to orders she laid linen cloths over her forehead, cheeks, chin, and nose, and went to bed. In spite of the ache that the corsets had left

behind them, and the burning of her face, she soon fell asleep.

It had not rained since noon, but the air was still damp and heavy; and by-and-by a breeze came up, and brought the dampness through the open window in gusts. By-and-by rain came up, and the breeze brought that in too; and all night long blew wet and cold around her bed.

She tried to toss off her discomfort, the heat of her face and the chilliness of her body; and she soon sent the linen rags flying in many directions.

She dreamed of fiery furnaces and ice-cold baths alternately till morning, but could not tell what was the matter until her first waking yawn. Then she knew there was trouble at the corners of her mouth, for they refused to stretch beyond a certain point. She seemed to have on a mask, so stiff had the fiery skin become. "It feels as if some one was at it with a carpet-stretcher," she said afterwards to John.

As soon as she opened her eyes she was glad to close them again, even against the dull light of the rainy morning.

What a morning for May! No wonder she was cold. She drew the bedclothes up about her

shoulders. Then she remembered a dear book Margie had given her, wondering if she could have left it by the open window, and got up to see.


She found it safe elsewhere; and since she was up, she went to the glass to take a peep at her new complexion, hoping much, and yet fearing something, from all that stiffness and burning.

The tan was gone; no traces of brown remained, but instead a delicate red dyed her face from hair to chin! Her lips and cheeks were no redder than her nose, her nose no redder than her forehead. The color was laid on impartially, not even the whites of her eyes being slighted.

In spite of the disadvantages of her new complexion, its hideousness and painfulness, she laughed long and loudly, and dressed as fast as she could to go and let John share the joke.

He was more hopelessly asleep than usual on this rainy morning. All the weight of the heavy atmosphere seemed to have settled on his eyelids. Jenny shook him, tickled, and pinched him; let cold drops of water trickle from the ends of her fingers down his neck; shrieked in his ears,

“‘T is the voice of the sluggard,
I hear him complain;’”



and was going away disgusted, when he called after her that she might have spared herself the yelling, the water did it.

She came back and sat down on the bed, and let him get a full view.

"What in the name of—"

"Do n't you like it, Johnny? It's my new complexion. All to please you, because you objected to tan."

"Did you spend all that dollar I lent you for paint?"

"Not a cent of it. This is out of the cook-book."

"You got it in your eyes!" screamed John.

"Yes, dear; and they smart so I can hardly keep them open. But it's first brown, then red, then white. Those are the rounds of the ladder of beauty. The redness and the smarting will go away together pretty soon, and then I'll be your lovely white sister."

"They wont go away before noon. Mother's coming at twelve. What'll she say?"

"She wont notice it," said Jenny. "You see if she does."

CHAPTER V.

AT twelve o'clock Jenny sat by the front window. John had gone to the dépôt.

She was cold one minute and hot the next. Her bones ached without ceasing. The pain in her eyes obliged her to keep them closed and hidden in her hands most of the time. The stiff, unmanageable skin on her face did not seem to be any more a part of her than the leather in her boots; and she had cause to rejoice that she had learned a practical lesson on patience and the discipline of nerves, yesterday.

A vision of the mother who once was coming to her from over the sea entered her heart as she sat there, and she thought, what if such a mother had ever really come home to her. What if she were coming home to her now; to love her and pet and nurse her, as Margie's mother once had done; to bathe the fever out of her eyes, and coax it away from her forehead with the cool touch of her hand.

When she heard the carriage wheels she lifted

her head from her hands and looked out. She felt the same sense of satisfaction in the stylish, graceful figure, stepping regally from the carriage and through the gate, that she always felt when she saw it for the first time in weeks or months ; and the same pride in the handsome face—a face striking even at that distance, and with her eyes half blinded.

She rushed out of the house and gave her mother a hearty embrace.

“Gently, my dear,” said her mother, in the chilly tones that always made Jenny’s blood rise. “Be careful ; you are on my dress.”

Jenny fell in the rear, by the side of an attendant called by John and her The Rubber, for the best of reasons.

“He thinks,” said her mother to John, continuing the conversation which she had interrupted by her untimely embrace, “that it may be the heart. There are reasons—oh, how do you do, Miss Goodrich—why he thinks there may be organic trouble ; quickened pulses under excitement, and violent beating when I lie awake at night ; and a sensation as if there were hearts all over me ; and a consciousness of the vital organs which never leaves me. It is

exceedingly unpleasant to be always conscious of one's own heart."

"Will you come in the library, mother?" said John, throwing open the door. "It was such a dark day we had a fire in the grate."

"Very cheerful," said his mother, "but I'll go directly to my room. No, I thank you, Miss Goodrich; Angeline is sufficient. Don't forget the bag, Angeline. My medicine is in it. Did you attend to the glasses, Miss Goodrich? Yes, of course. Go on, Angeline, Miss Goodrich says you will find glasses on the table. Five drops to three teaspoonfuls of water. I am coming."

"Wont you lunch with us, mamma?" said Jenny. "It is all ready."

"No, thanks. Angeline will come down for mine."

She went slowly up the stairs, her well-shaped garments following gracefully the graceful motions of her figure—as artistic a mother as child could desire. But Jenny, watching her with wistful eyes, and disappointment in her heart, wished she were crooked and deformed, hideous, foolish, anything that would draw them nearer.

She went back to the library and sat down before

the open fire. John was there already, sitting before the fire. They looked at the flames, and by-and-by they looked at each other.

"What is the use of taking things that way?" said John. "It is so silly to expect miracles, and be everlastingly disappointed."

They looked at the flames again; and after a while Jenny said:

"You see she never noticed my face. What did I tell you?"

"She thought it was sunburnt probably," said John.

"She wont come out of her room till dinner," said Jenny. "She might have stayed to lunch. The table looked so pretty to-day. I fixed the flowers myself. Meanwhile I guess I'll go over and consult Margie's mother about my face. Oh, my eyes!"

"I'll bring the doctor," said John, jumping up.

"No you wont!" said she, jumping after, and seizing him. "Not any doctors around me."

"Well I appreciate the sentiment," said John. "We get enough of them by report to have a natural antipathy; but you needn't pinch through to the bone. I wont go. Only something must be done right away. May I bring Miss Goodrich?"

"I do n't care. I'm perishing with cold, Johnny; such little creepy chills inside my bones and running up and down my back; and then in a few minutes I'll be roasting."

John vanished, and appeared soon with Miss Goodrich, who carried a glass of hot lemonade in one hand and a cup of camphor and water in the other.

"Drink this," she said, "and wash your eyes well with the camphor and water all day. Like as not you'll be blind from your foolishness. I hope you've learned to let well enough alone. A good, healthy color like yours did n't need improving."

"That's the first compliment you ever gave me, Goody," said Jenny. "It will help me bear a great deal."

"I'll miss my mark if you do n't have a great deal to bear before you get done with it," said Miss Goodrich.

"How nice and cheerful you are," said Jenny; "such a soothing individual to have around a sick person."

"There are times when plain talk's more to the point than softness," said Miss Goodrich.

"Goody did n't get any letter this morning," said Jenny.

"You've got a cold on you that's going to make pretty work if you do n't look out," said Miss Goodrich. "I s'pose you had that window by your bed open when the wind changed last night and blew up rain, did n't you?"

"That's precisely what I did, Goody dear."

"I can only hope you'll live and learn," said she. "I do n't know how many times I've told you that if you would have all out-doors in your room nights, you'd better let it in by a window that do n't open right on your bed. However, it's your cold, not mine; but if you do n't want to be down sick with it, you'll keep in this warm room this wet day, especially after taking hot drinks."

"I'll watch her," said John. "I'll be her jailor."

"Poor old soul!" said Jenny, as the door closed after Miss Goodrich. "She takes to tears as naturally as Margie does; but she's ashamed to have me know it, because I do n't. How rosy she got around the eyes and nose, did n't she? Nothing overcomes her like seeing you or me sick. How gruff she had to be to hide it. She'll hover around this room most of the afternoon; and if I catch her at it, she'll pretend she's looking for spiders in the

hall. Did you ever notice with what a vengeance Goody persecutes the spiders, Johnny? I wonder if she's ever been caught in a web herself?

“Will you walk into my parlor?
Said the spider to the fly.”

Do you suppose she ever accepted the invitation and got a bite, Johnny?”

“I haven't given the subject enough thought to risk an opinion,” said cautious John.

“I must ferret out the mystery of those letters some day.”

“Will you promise to stay here till I come back?” said John.

“If you're not gone too long, Johnny.”

He came back with her lunch, and argued and persuaded as she ate it, until he had her promise that she would stay by the fire that afternoon while he was at school.

“I know it's going against nature for you not to paddle around in the mud on a rainy day; but this once, Jenny, deny yourself for me. I'll come out of school as soon as I can, and then I'll go and tell Margie you're sick;” was John's parting speech.

It was indeed against nature for Jenny to stay under shelter on such a day. There was a call for

her in a storm, which she seldom failed to obey. She loved to go out and take part in the turmoil of the elements; blowing when the wind blew, letting it carry her along in the tide of its gusts, her ears so close to its murmuring voice that it seemed to tell its discontent to her as to a comrade; whirling around when it executed whirligigs on corners; and not refusing to let the rain slap her face, and then trickle apologetically over it afterwards; like Margie's mother's baby, who slapped and stroked her, scolded and cooed to her in the same moment. She loved to investigate with her toes the deeps of little pools, and experiment on plashing her rubbers to their limits without wetting her boots.

But the library had its rainy-day attractions for Jenny too. One of the chief delights of her wanderings was the coming home, after she was tired, to its shelter and society.

With its four walls of books closing her in, and a chosen one down in her lap in the window-seat, she became for the time as much a part of the heroic past as she had been a part of the storm, entering into fellowship with the men whose names live after them, by as subtle and magic a sympathy as she had entered into fellowship with nature.

She loved history, more perhaps than Margie loved novels; since its charms, once felt, are to those of fiction what real physical experiences are to the same in a dream.

There she would sit, with no human presence to distract her from the resurrected heroes, and no human voice to break the silence, waxing dauntless with warriors, eloquent with statesmen, mighty of muscle with the Olympic and Isthmian victors, and sometimes brave for love's extremest suffering and sacrifice with those who endured and died for the greatest but gentlest Hero whom her reading taught her to revere.

Forgetting, when she closed her book, that her little world in the nineteenth century presented opportunities for only very ordinary achievements, and was peopled with only ordinary people, of whom she was one of the least, she would feel within herself the possibilities of all heroism, and long to go about the doing of doughty deeds.

She sat by the window and watched John out of the gate. She was too ill to be tempted to go after him, even if she had not promised; and she knew that no heroes could come visiting her through the pages of books to-day, for her eyes would not

let her read. Margie was in school, and she had not allowed John to stay at home, because she was particularly ambitious about his marks at present. So she was doomed to an afternoon with her own thoughts.

The very idea of it made her get up and fly around the room, searching tables and shelves and nooks and corners for entertainment.

But she found none, and she sat down by the fire. The flames hurt her eyes, and she sat down by the window. She laid her arms on the sill, and put her throbbing, burning head in them. She thought what a horrid companion oneself was, and that if an enemy wanted to inflict the worst of punishments on her, he could n't do better than shut her up with her thoughts.

Some people, she reflected, liked to be alone with their thoughts. How was it that they had calm, agreeable meditations? She could not think long without stirring up all the mysteries of past and future, causes and consequences, for her consideration; and many a perplexing question, many a speculation, and many a dread would trouble her.

She never deliberately sat down to purposeless thought; and she was never driven to it in wakeful

nights, because her healthy body knew no wakeful nights.

But to-day she seemed to be at bay with the whims of her own mind; and she suddenly took the blues—not a mild melancholy, nor a pensive sadness—but the genuine black blues.

She had never had them but twice before in her life: once when she was a little girl, and fell ill in the afternoon while John was at school. She had thought longingly of the pretty mother far away, and how she would nurse her if she were there. Then she had begun an intense watch for John. She had watched all the afternoon and all the evening, getting sicker and lonelier and more eager each moment, until it grew so late that they said he would not come. Everybody agreed that he had been beguiled home by some boy, persuaded to stay to tea, and finally all night; but which boy of his many friends had done it, and where to go to find him, nobody knew. So over her baby soul had swept her first experience of utter and hopeless desolation.

The other time was when the pretty mother she had loved so long and truly died with the stranger mother's coming home.

The wind drove the rain against the window at intervals with dismal beatings. She was sick and all alone, and the *horror*—indescribable, but only too generally understood—surged over her. She felt as if she had never done a respectable thing in her life, nor was capable of one in future. She could not remember any good times past, nor see how she could possibly have any in days to come.

What depressed her more than anything else was the consciousness of a presence in the room over her head—that mockery of all her dear little childish fancies and her maturer hopes.

It is an instinct of illness to want one's mother, which neither time nor distance can teach one to outgrow. Many a woman, orphaned long ago, has been waked from sick slumbers by her own crying for the mother who once held her up in her arms, and rocked and sang and petted her pains away. It is as natural to want to take hold of a mother's hand on the outskirts of the way that leads towards death, as to want to take hold of an almighty Hand at the other end of the way, when timid feet are bidden to step out into the dark.

Jenny wanted her mother; not that some one should come and fill her place with gentler servi-

ces. She wanted the mother up stairs to be transformed into the mother of her old faith.

It was not her way to sit still and bear as much as she had borne in the last five minutes. She started up with a spring. But where could she go? and what could she do? Her promise to John kept her caged in that room. It would be better to be in the kitchen than alone here, and she thought John could not object to her sitting by the kitchen fire if she wore a shawl through the halls. She did not stop long to consider, but put on the shawl and ran away from herself.

CHAPTER VI.

SHE met Miss Goodrich not far from the library door, with a glass in her hand.

"Where are you going?" said she.

"To the kitchen, Goody," said Jenny.

"Take this with you, and drink it while it's hot. I was just coming up with it."

"Thanks, Goody."

She carried it on to the kitchen, where she was received with loud welcomes by the cook, and soon followed by Miss Goodrich, who brought a big arm-chair from up stairs.

But Jenny declined the chair, and curled down on the floor in a cosey corner by the stove, and called for cat and kittens.

Delia dashed the dish-water from her fingers and flew to obey, for Jenny was a favorite in the kitchen.

"Kit, kit, kit!" she piped from the doorstep; and four little balls of fuzzy gray came scrambling and rolling down the wood-pile, with their

mother close behind, who needed no call but their going.

"This is the cunningest, Miss Jenny," said Delia, selecting a ball so nearly round that it was a marvel where its legs and head came from. "Did you ever see impudence to beat that in its eyes?"

"Never!" said Jenny. "And such a pert little nose, too. Tum here 'ou tunnning tittens!"

"She's spoiled," said Delia. "She's the mother's pet;" which was evident from the concern the old cat manifested as she kept near.

"Does she do nice tricks, Delia? What have you taught her?"

"Law! she don't need no teaching, Miss Jenny. She's as full of born tricks as she can hold. But you can't get her to play to-day. She's sick from greediness. She ate so much breakfast this morning that she's been heavy and mopy ever since. Why, the greediness o' that cat goes ahead o' anything you'd believe. She'll put her paws round a plate and eat her way through it, and not one o' them cats dare hinder. Her mother'd box the other ones' ears quick enough if she saw them doing the same. But for all her greediness you can't help liking her, Miss Jenny, she's so cunning."

"She's almost as sweet as Mrs. Barnard's baby," said Jenny, kissing into her soft, warm fur, and cuddling her up in her neck. "But she doesn't like me, Delia. See how she tries to squirm out of my hands."

"She wants to be hanging 'round her mother," said Delia. "That's the way of 'em when they're sick; and the old cat isn't satisfied till she gets her paws around 'em, if anything's the matter. That's nature, Miss Jenny. See what a stew the old one's in now."

A jealous pain shot straight to Jenny's heart from Delia's words.

The old cat was rubbing uneasily against her and looking up with troubled eyes, and the little one did not return her caresses, nor seem at all contented in her hands.

"Go, then," said Jenny, releasing her, "and let's see what you'll do."

She ran straight to her mother, and with the petulant airs of the family favorite, proceeded to slap and push and poke her into shape for a bed.

The old cat was perfectly passive, seeming to feel that she could have no higher aim in life than to make a comfortable bed for her kitten. The

only time that she volunteered a motion was after the little one had cuddled finally in her breast, to fold a paw around her.

Jenny rose.

"Don't go, Miss Jenny," said Delia. "Take the rocking-chair, and let me fix your feet up on another. Stay and be social. I know it's lonesome for you up stairs, sick as you are, and Mr. John away; and a bit down in your mind besides."

"I'm restless, Delia," said Jenny.

"Oh, now, let's see you brighten up like yourself, Miss Jenny. I'd be afraid your time had come if I saw you real down-hearted. See how nice and cosey I'll fix you in this corner."

"Thank you very much; but I don't feel like sitting still," said Jenny. "I'll try the library for a while."

She wanted to get away from that little family group. It was less than human—animal, the commonest animal instinct—she thought, for a mother to nestle her young. The kitchen was spoiled for her. Yet she did not want to go back to the library. She walked slowly up stairs.

She lingered in the hall above, and when she reached the banisters she leaned on them, and stood

there. She could not bear to open the library door, and she lifted her eyes and looked up. What a short way it seemed to a mother—only a flight of stairs; and yet it was a wider distance than the ocean had put between them.

She dreaded the library so much, that with an instinct of avoiding it she put her feet on the stairs. She was well wrapped in her thick shawl, and too warm to be troubled by her promise to John; so she slowly went up, having her bed before her as an object, which she thought of with comfort to her aching bones.

There was a large horsehair sofa standing in the upper hall, and instead of passing it she sat down on it. The house was very still; silence below stairs, perfect silence above. The hall had only one window, at its end, and on this dark day she sat in twilight. But she lingered, because she dreaded her own lonely room.

She pinched herself to take in an appreciation of her surroundings, for there was an air of unreality about everything. The stupor in her brain made it seem as if she were a thousand miles away from the objects perceptible to her touch; and she had only to close her eyes to be in doubt whether

she were in a dream or out of it. She felt that she might do unaccountable things, and must watch herself well.

She knew that what she ought to do was to go at once to the library, or else to bed, instead of loitering about the chilly halls. But her eyes were fixed with a fascination on her mother's closed door.

She was thinking how persistently and unmistakably that little kitten down stairs had made its needs known to its mother, and urged its claims. She was thinking that she had never told her mother she was sick and wanted her. She was thinking that mothers ought to be as kind as cats, if once they were made to understand.

She drew the shawl up around her neck, put her head down on the back of the lounge, and closed her eyes. Then in her fancies, or in her dreams—her waking was so near sleep—she saw a miracle wrought by love on the other side of the closed door. The lines of the face that she had seen hitherto proud and cold were soft and tender, and the large eyes warm and kind ; and in her fancy, or in her dreams, she had found the way at last to her mother's heart. On that afternoon, through her

sickness, mother and daughter had learned what the words meant for the first time.

She started at the voice of the Rubber :

"You look feverish, miss."

She had moved the door so carefully on its well-oiled hinges, and stepped so lightly in her soft slippers, that Jenny had not heard.

"How's mamma?" she asked, more because she felt called on to say something than because she cared to propound the question.

"Quite comfortable, miss, thank you," said the Rubber, in tones that were perfectly audible, but that it seemed a miracle one should hear, for she carried on all her remarks inside her mouth, and apparently dispensed with the accompaniment of a voice, yet you could not say she whispered.

"Perhaps you would like to go in," suggested she.

Having suggested it, she seemed to expect it; and Jenny was in such a weak state of body and mind that it did not occur to her to disappoint those expectations. Compelled by the Rubber's superior mental condition, she meekly rose to obey.

Not that she was unwilling to obey. She had arrived at that degree of soft-heartedness and weak-

mindfulness where she was willing to run all her risks over again on the smallest chance. And two strong encouragements had suddenly arisen: The Rubber in that dark hall had noticed her fever hues; her mother could not fail to notice them. Her mother would be alone. The Rubber so seldom left her that she and John were generally obliged to say what they had to say in her presence.

In case of an embarrassment she would have a ruse ready. She would ask for a book to read.

She walked bravely up to the door, forgetting how suddenly her courage always fled before her mother's gaze, knocked, heard "Come in," and entered.

Her mother was lying by the window, on a wide couch which had been manufactured with especial reference to her fastidious joints. It was a bright couch, and a bright afghan was over her, and she looked like a picture, of course. She had the artist's lines about her face and form, and the artist's instincts for surroundings, that made her, however she sat, or stood, or lay, seem just ready for a frame.

Those personal graces of hers were the secret of her power. They were half the secret of Jenny's forbearance and persistent hopes. She was quite

unaware of the influence that her mother's mere physique had over her mind. But if there had not been in her mother's physical loveliness an argument to beholders of spiritual loveliness to correspond, Jenny might long ago have settled down to her disappointments and the sufficiency of other friendships. If her mother's face had been sharp and cross and repellant, she could better have understood and sooner have accepted and made the best of facts. But irresistibly to her mind that beauty argued sometimes a beauty of motherliness, which had only to be sought in the right way to be reached and roused.

Her mother, and the room's picturesque furnishing and warmth of coloring, had their usual magnetic influence on her senses as she opened the door.

Mrs. Stephens held a book in her hands, which she moved away from her face on Jenny's entrance.

She gave her a full look. The effect of her eyes was peculiar. There was a conscious power, a royal assumption in them sometimes, which overwhelmed Jenny with a sense of hopeless inferiority.

"O Jenny!" she said, in a tone expressive of a little surprise, perhaps of a little annoyance; for she was interested in her book, and an interruption

at the crisis of a story cannot always be graciously received.

She waited a moment, while Jenny stood speechless ; and then, as courtesy demanded, asked her to sit down.

Jenny sank on the edge of the nearest chair, and sat perched there, as if she meant to reel and roll off any moment. She was apt to be awkward in the presence of her mother's rebuking grace.

She did not say she had come to borrow a book, and yet surely that little ruse of hers was greatly needed, for never was situation more embarrassing. Her tongue was like those tongues in dreams, that are wordless in defiance of the will that bids them speak and the muscles that make them go.

If she had hardly known before whether she was in a dream or out, she could hardly believe that she was out of one now. The stillness of the room, its magnetism, the strangeness of her errand—a daughter come to establish with a mother natural relations that had been ignored for years, a daughter suing for a mother's heart—and the stupor in her brain, all made this place seem more unreal than any of the others where she had been.

But, through her bewilderment, she appreciated

the necessity of escape. She was dizzy sitting on the edge of that chair, and she could not move. She felt a sudden, lonely, childish pain in her heart ; and the rising of something like sobs in her throat. She would have given anything to be on the other side the door.

She opened her mouth and tried to speak so that she might go.

Her mother had turned her face towards the window, and her fingers tapped a little impatient tune on her book.

Jenny looked at her through a mist. What was it? Tears? She going to cry! She who had never cried a dozen times in her whole life!

Mrs. Stephens turned around. She had waited attentively to hear what the child had to say ; but she could not wait for ever. So she fixed her eyes on her again, and broke the awkward silence with :

“Well, Jenny.”

She must speak then. She was losing self-control. She must say something and escape at once. She did not think of the book she had meant to ask for in such an emergency. She had but one thought in her head, and but one word to express it in.

Mrs. Stephens noticed her emotions ; and how flushed her face was. She was considering her attentively when Jenny, compelled by her steadfast gaze to break the silence, opened her lips and gave utterance, to the only word her mind suggested, the word that was the great perplexity of her brain and burden of her heart. It came out with an intensity that told the whole story. "Mother!" she said.

But Mrs. Stephens did not read the whole story. She only saw an excited child whom some unaccountable emotion had driven to emphatic speech ; who had urgent wants to make known, and was awkward about telling them.

"What is it?" she answered.

But before she could press her inquiry Jenny had gone.

She closed her book. She was disturbed.

There was an abrupt, ungoverned manner about the child which would be a serious defect in her some day ; and not at such a distant day, either ; for she was getting to be a young lady now. She had sadly neglected her duty in not putting her under training in some school where special attention was given to manners. She would consider the subject, and consult authorities.

She opened her book to take up the crisis ; but it was less interesting now than her own thoughts. She wondered what the child wanted. Undoubtedly she would come back when she was calmer, and explain. She found herself listening for footsteps outside the door.

What could she have wanted ? Possibly she had got involved in some small financial troubles, and was ashamed to overdraw her allowance. But she was not a mother to deny her children money. Their guardian had rebuked her more than once for her careless liberality. And she thought that pecuniary difficulties could hardly have moved Jenny so deeply.

She looked ill. But if she wanted nursing or medicine, she would naturally go to Miss Goodrich, as she understood her constitution, had taken her through all her illnesses, and knew better than any one else what to do. Her own delicate health had always forbidden her giving much time and thought to the children's complaints.

She was foolish to speculate. Certainly if Jenny wanted very much anything that she could give her, she would come back and ask for it. She ought not to run the risk of a headache by worry-

ing over the matter. The doctor had particularly charged her not to worry during her absence from his care. She really must not vex her mind with such trifles. If Jenny came back, that would be time enough to see what she could do for her.

So once more she took up her book. But she heard that word mother, spoken intensely and appealingly, and could not cease wondering what it meant.

When Angeline came back, she told her to go down and ask Miss Jenny what it was she had wanted.

"She says, 'Nothing,' ma'am," reported Angeline on her return.

"Where is she?"

"Sitting by the library fire, not looking well, ma'am."

"Go back and ask her if she is not well, and if there is anything I can do for her."

"She says, 'Nothing at all,' ma'am, very decided," reported Angeline again.

"Really," said Mrs. Stephens, closing her book, "a story is not worth reading that one has to make an effort to keep one's mind on. Angeline, take my purse from the upper drawer and give it to

Miss Jenny, and tell her if there is n't enough there she must say so."

"She do n't want money, ma'am. She spoke up sharp," reported Angeline.

"Do n't criticise Miss Jenny's manners. You may rub my spine, Angeline," said Mrs. Stephens, "and see if it will quiet me. I feel nervous this afternoon. You know the doctor particularly cautioned me against excitement."

"Yes, ma'am," said the Rubber, preparing to do duty in her special line of business by removing a starched cuff from her right wrist. "I thought I left you composed, ma'am, when I went down for the alcohol."

The Rubber was gifted in her profession by natural magnetism, and skilled by long practice, and was a powerful anodyne when taken in sufficient quantities. She rubbed for an hour this afternoon before she could rub out of her patient's memory the sound of a word that rang an appeal.

Mrs. Stephens, with all her conjecturing about Jenny's object in calling upon her, had not approached the truth, because it was a fact well grounded in her mind that Jenny did not love her as a daughter should love her mother.

She, too, had felt serious lacks. She had had her disappointments too. She had had visions and dreams beyond the sea that never came true.

She had left two pretty babies when she ran away from her sorrow, two delicate, daintily-robed little things, who were all her exacting taste required in person and apparel.

She had expected to see those same children grown up—etherealized possibly by time—on her return, for she had spared no pains in sending all requisite orders home, and securing proper nurses and teachers. And when that rough, tanned, and boisterous pair came out to claim kinship, her first impulse had been to resent the imposture and demand her own.

But after the shock of the first disappointment, she could have loved even them, if they had loved her. She waited for that voluntary homage which she was in the habit of receiving, and which seemed her natural due. They waited for that demonstrative tenderness which they saw lavished on other children; and pride rather than forbearance was nourished in all their hearts, until they grew sadly accustomed to their unnatural relations.

CHAPTER VII.

JENNY, sitting over the library fire when the little gusts blowing up through the cracks drove her away from the window, and by the window when the heat grew intolerable to her eyes, watching for John, resolved to be quite contented with his love in future. No delusive mother-love should tempt her fancy and tamper with her reason again. She had played that little farce to the end.

John had said to her in the morning:

“What’s the sense in blaming people for not acting out what isn’t in them? She likes us as well as she can like any one but herself. Do n’t be so high-flown, and let your imagination make a goose of you. You think, because she’s first class in looks, she must be first class straight through. That’s a girl all over. Reason has to be cultivated in girls, like a taste for olives. Never knew one born with either of ’em. Now, then, if you go to getting romantic and maudlin again, it’s your own lookout, and serves you right if you’re made miserable.”

The words, which she had only half endorsed then, seemed now to her full of practical wisdom. Why could n't she have heeded them and escaped the mortification of that interview? She condemned herself severely for getting wrought up to a state of mind whose natural climax was that cry of hers to motherhood. The tears she just ignored. They had not fallen, and who could prove that they were the genuine article? The sobs she regarded angrily as impudent intruders, pushing their way where they were n't known nor wanted. The total she blushed to remember, and tried to forget.

Offering her money! through that maddening voice of the Rubber's! How she had wanted to throw something at her, when she stuck out the purse and mouthed her mother's words over in those voiceless tones, which, the marvel of it always was, she heard. If one last stroke had been needed to finish the whole business, it was that her mother should think she went up to her room to cry and sob for money!

She had been very weak this afternoon—had not resisted a single emotion that chose to try experiments on her. It all began with her giving way to her thoughts. Rambling, uncontrolled

thought was at the bottom of half the mischief in the world, she believed. She would guard her thoughts well hereafter, and never forget the lesson of to-day.

She certainly would not be overcome again this afternoon. She did not regard aching bones as she flew continually from fire to window and window to fire, always keeping watch of the clock.

Three now. John's school did not close till half past, and it might take him another half hour to go and bring Margie. She must not expect him till four. She would not fear that hour. She would move about, and perhaps the next time she heard Miss Goodrich's step outside the door she would call her in.

The next time she heard her step she heard her voice also, and heard what she said replied to by a voice that was gruff and deep, and not a woman's. Yet it was neither John's nor Michael's. The conversation was carried on in earnest undertones. Perhaps the author of the mysterious letters had come around at last, and was pleading for a happy termination to his patience. She had not long to indulge her imagination on the subject, for light tread and heavy tread approached together the

library door. The knob was cautiously turned, and Miss Goodrich's face put in, with a conciliatory smile on it that Jenny knew meant mischief. She had been doing something whose consequences she trembled to meet.

"Walk in," said she, opening the door, and letting Jenny see no less a person on the threshold than a doctor!

She started up. She felt quite equal to annihilating him, and no fear of results, until she looked in his eye. There she saw danger. He was very tall—six-feet-three in his stockings—and there was a grim suggestion of vengeance to rebellious patients about his mouth, which calmed her.

He could be the gentlest of his kind when gentleness was needed; but he knew his subject, and he walked to the window, and said in sepulchral tones,

"Come here, Miss Stephens!"

Jenny was surprised at the swiftness with which her feet carried her to him, and the meekness with which she turned her eyes to the light when he bade her.

"You've got something in them!" he said.

"Yes, sir."

"What?"

"A wash."

"Wash!"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, what kind—tooth-wash or hair-wash?"

"Something for the complexion," said Jenny, very faintly.

"Ah!" said the doctor. "Are you in the habit of using rouge?"

"No, sir, I'm not. I was tanned, and I wanted to get rid of it."

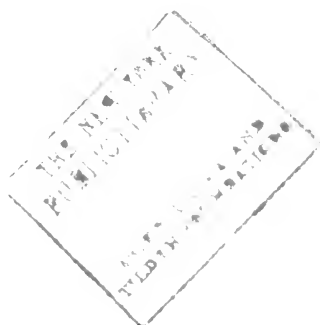
"Bring me the bottle, and I'll see how serious this matter is."

"I'll get it," said Miss Goodrich.

She had no farther to go than the hall, where she took the bottle from her pocket, it having been on a journey in her pocket to the doctor's office. There he had smelt of it, pronounced it harmless, been informed of all the facts of the case as she had them from John, and pledged to secrecy.

Jenny thought Miss Goodrich returned in a wonderfully short time. She hoped Jenny would n't notice how guilty she looked when she saw the doctor smelling critically, exactly as he had done at his office. He gave the bottle back to her.





"Pour it out," he said.

He looked so tragic as he sat down at the table and drew a black case from his inner pocket, that Jenny was moved to approach him, and ask feebly,

"Do—you think—I am going—to be—*blind*?"

"No," said the doctor. "You have escaped this time. If you don't take more cold you wont lose your eyes, and no more of your face than the skin."

"Is it going to come off?"

"I am afraid there is no help," said the doctor.

"It is too late for our practice to keep it on."

"Will I be white then?"

"More of a pink, perhaps," said the doctor.

"Take these powders once in four hours."

He rose and loomed above her high and grim. He went to the door, and she thought he was gone, when he turned and said, for Miss Goodrich's benefit, and in a tone that convinced her his skill had but just snatched her from blindness or an early grave,

"It is well I was sent for in time. It is impossible to tell what may happen yet in case of exposure."

Jenny had no scolding for her benefactress then.

"Is the room warm enough, Goody, do you suppose?" she asked. "Had I better have anything more on me?"

Miss Goodrich rejoiced to see the success of her little scheme, and that she had found at last the doctor who was a match for Miss Jenny. She had tried two others, on the rare occasions in her life when Jenny had been ill enough for a doctor, with very mortifying results.

"I think, if we keep about this heat, and you're careful not to throw off anything that's on you, and don't sit near the windows, we'll do, Miss Jenny."

"I have to go to the windows once in a while to look for John," said Jenny. "It's the longest afternoon I ever spent without him, Goody."

"Angeline said you'd been up to see your ma."

"I did n't stay but a moment. She's not very well, you know."

"Travelling tires her," remarked Miss Goodrich, rather snappishly.

"Yes," said Jenny. "Going, Goody?"

"Just to fetch some jelly for your powder."

Jenny opened her mouth and swallowed it like a good girl, when it was all prepared.

"I'll be round once in four hours, medicine time," said Miss Goodrich. "Is there anything you'd like, Miss Jenny?"

"Nothing but to have you stay and help me keep the blues away."

She had the door open, but she closed it, came back, and began to move nervously about the room, setting a chair out of the way here and there, twitching the table-cover smooth, placing books at angles, and finally whisking off imaginary dust with the corner of her apron.

"You make me fidgety, Goody," said Jenny, "fussing around that way. Besides I invited you to visit me, and visitors don't do your housework for you. I want you to sit down here by the fire, in this big, comfortable chair, and talk to me."

"Law, Miss Jenny!" said she, "I a'n't one of the talking kind."

"But you *can* talk, you know," said Jenny. "Everybody that's got a tongue and a brain can say something. Consult the 'Physiology,' if you don't believe me. Come, sit down. Invalids should never be crossed, you know. I may work myself into a fever if you keep me teasing much longer."

"Well, if you're lonesome I s'pose I might as

well be round as anybody else that a'n't Mr. John, or Miss Margie," said she, dropping into an upright chair, and shutting speech in her mouth with a snap like a spring lock.

"John, Margie, Goody, that's the way you think it goes?" asked Jenny.

"What I said was that all the human race was alike to you, after them two," she answered very decisively; "and it's all the same whether it's me, or Angeline, if you want company."

As Angeline was her pet aversion she introduced her name with a purpose.

"How the Rubber would madden me, sitting where you are, squinting her little red blinkers at me, and mumbling and hissing," said Jenny. "Why I think in the mood I'm in to-day I should throw the inkstand at her, regardless of clothes. I do n't believe she'd budge, do you, Goody? I wonder if you could make her jump. I mean to try it some time. She's the most aggravating piece of composure I ever saw. That voice of hers is water-cure style, you know. It's considered the highest accomplishment for a nurse. The softer you can get a thing there, the better. I loathe water-cures, Goody."

"So do I!" said Miss Goodrich; "and everything that comes out of 'em. Except, of course," she added, rather frightened as she realized the sweeping tendency of her remark, "the lady patients."

"Of course!" said Jenny. "Think, Goody," she proceeded, "of having Angeline rub you the way she does mamma! Ugh! I'd as soon have snakes crawl over me."

"And I too!" said Miss Goodrich. "There is n't much water-cure about that doctor that came here to-day," she ventured.

"He was a kind of a nice old bear," said Jenny.

After a moment's pause, in which Jenny looked at the fire, she took up again, musingly, the words: "John, Margie, Goody. John, Margie, Goody; John, Goody, Margie," she said. "I wonder which way it goes."

She cast a glance at Miss Goodrich, to catch her twisting her pleased face into scowling lines.

"You see," said Jenny, "I've known you a good while, and you've taken care of me more than any one else, and I've got used to you. John, Margie, Goody; John, Goody, Margie. I declare, if I can tell which way it goes. John first, of course! John

first and for ever! But after that, whether it's Margie, Goody, or Goody, Margie, is more than I know. I do believe, Goody, that—John out—you stand equal chances with the world."

Miss Goodrich looked particularly ferocious at that moment, but the rosy tints of eyes and nose betrayed her.

She appeared more speechless than ever; and there was another pause.

"Entertain me, Goody," said Jenny presently. "I'm doing all the talking. It's bad for my cold."

"I'm sure, Miss Jenny, I've nothing to say. I'm not free-spoken. I never was from a child," said Miss Goodrich, with considerable softness of tones.

"I'll tell you what you can do: tell me a story," said Jenny, looking at her fixedly. "I'm just in the mood for something nice and romantic, Goody."

She was disappointed not to see a blush, or some consciousness of what she meant, in her face. She simply looked perplexed.

"Oh, now, Goody," said Jenny, reaching over and laying her hand on hers, "tell me all about those letters you get. I'll never tell. And who knows but I could help you? You have n't a better friend."

Again the expression of Miss Goodrich's face was a surprise to her. It looked sadder, and more reflective than she was in the habit of seeing it.

She hesitated, and seemed moved to speech by the hand that lay on hers with the touch of a champion.

"I have thought sometimes, Miss Jenny," she said, "that I could tell you. You're so kind to trouble that I have thought I could tell you, for the sake of telling somebody."

"Tell me, Goody," said Jenny, gently, more anxious to serve her now than curious for the romance. "I'll help you. You see if I don't."

Miss Goodrich was opening her mouth when her opportunity fled; for the other two who made up the trio of Jenny's best friends, came in.

CHAPTER VIII.

"MR. DAVIES let me out quarter of an hour sooner, on your account," said John.

"Red as a rose is she!" shouted Margie. "O Tom, how funny you look! You poor, little, naughty girl! I can't help saying, 'I told you so!' like the old woman. If you'd only got dry yesterday, as I charged you to!"

"What's done is done; what's past is gone," said Jenny. "Let's be comfortable, Prink. I've had torment enough for one day. How are you, Johnny? Miss me any this afternoon?"

"I guess you missed me a little," said John. "Was it very doleful, you disconsolate boiled lobster?"

"Allusions to my complexion are decidedly out of place in my present condition. The doctor thinks I've had a narrow escape," said Jenny.

"Doctor!" said John.

"Don't try to look so innocent," said Jenny. "I see by your eye that you were in the plot. I

can always tell when you and Goody've been putting your heads together. What are you laughing at, Prink Barnard? I wish you'd go home and take John with you."

"She should n't be teased, the precious baby!" said Margie, with an embrace.

"So she should n't," said John, with another, which, from his arm of iron, and applied directly to the throat, threatened strangulation.

"Will you be kind enough to retire and send Miss Goodrich?" said Jenny.

"Bring that lounge up here by the fire, please, John," said Margie. "I'm going to fix her on it before I go; and don't mention the fact that I brought my baggage."

"Are you really going to stay all night, Prinky? What will become of little Rose? Let me see the bag before I can believe such good news."

"Gaze and be glad," said John, swinging it high in the air.

"Little Rose may cry all night if it will do you any good," said Margie. "I think you come before Rose when you're sick. She'll probably crawl in between Patty and Bessie for one night. Mamma said that I was to come as fast as I could, and stay

as long as you wanted me, Tommy. This is Friday, you know. No school to-morrow."

"So it is!" said Jenny. "I had n't thought of it before. Your mother's a jewel, Prinky."

"And how's our pretty mamma?" said Prinky. "Is n't it lovely that she happens to be at home now while you're sick? though, of course, she's so miserable herself that she won't be able to take much care of you. But it must be lovely just to feel that she's in the house. I wonder if I can go up and see her a moment, only long enough to say, 'How d'ye do?'"

"I suppose she'll see you," said Jenny. "She always will."

"Is n't it nice to be a privileged person? I feel quite flatterèd by your mother's kindness to me."

"You ought to," said Jenny. "She doesn't often take such a fancy to any one."

"I feel as if it were a condescension for her to notice me," said Margie. "She's so different from any one else in town. She's like a queen when she rides out. Everybody stares. She makes me think of all the heroines I ever read about."

"Heroines be sunk in the Pacific!" said Jenny, rather crossly. "Don't say heroine to me, Marg."

"What an old bear it is this afternoon," said Margie. "I shall run away to the pretty mamma while it gets pleasant."

She vanished from the room as gracefully as Mrs. Stephens could have done it.

"How she glides!" said Jenny to John. "That's what takes mamma."

"Oh, she gets down and kisses her feet," said John; "that's it. 'Dear Mrs. Stephens, what heavenly beauty! Oh, those dusky orbs; they make my soul shiver! Oh, that hair of midnight hue, and the shine as of the bootblack's brush upon it! Oh, that creamy skin! that rosebud mouth! those carmine-tinted cheeks! those teeth of pearl!' Bah! Did you ever hear her go on, Jen?"

"I should think I had," said Jenny. "She means it all, poor little Prink! I know she thinks I'm a stony-hearted daughter—bless her innocence! She can imagine a stony-hearted daughter; but it's beyond her power to imagine anything out of the way in a mother, with such a mother as she has. There's one person that understands things perfectly, and no one else ever has or will."

"Goody," said John.

"Of course," said Jenny, resolving to make

an opportunity very soon for that confession of hers.

"I think Mrs. Barnard smelleth it afar," said John.

"Perhaps," said Jenny. "I've had my suspicions of her."

"If we piled on the soft soap she might take a fancy to us too," said John. "You haven't seen anything of her this afternoon, I s'pose? Your sickness did n't bring her 'round?"

"I've been up there," said Jenny, in rather weak tones, looking away from John at the fire.

She knew that she should some time confess even this latest, most inexcusable folly to him, and she thought she should feel better to have it over.

She was comfortably arranged on the lounge where Margie had left her, and John had taken a seat at the foot of it. He leaned forward to see her eyes.

"What for?" he said.

"It was horribly lonesome here," said Jenny, "and I was so nervous."

"Look out," said John, "you're trespassing on mother's territory. She's got a monopoly on nerves."

"And I thought perhaps she ought to know I was sick."

"Did you state the case to her?"

"I thought she could see for herself."

"Well, did you find any miracle had been wrought on her eyes?"

"No."

"O Jen, again!"

"It's the last time, Johnny," said Jenny.

"It strikes me I've heard that remark somewhere before," said John.

"You may believe me or not," said Jenny, "but I'm convinced at last. I've *felt* the truth to-day so that I can't doubt any more."

"Seeing that feeling's believing with you," said John, "there's some hope. Feelings are your arguments, and when you get a good rousing one it's the summing up. Did you have a rouser to-day, Jen?"

"I can't exactly explain it, Johnny," said Jenny. "I was n't up stairs long, and we did n't say a dozen words; but I took it all in as I've never been able to before, and after this I wont want any better friend than you as long as I live. I perfectly understand mother's hopeless selfishness at last."

"Now you've struck on a new rock," said John. "It's from one extreme to another with you."

"Don't be hard on me, Johnny."

"Not for the world, chicken. I'm just meditating on the golden mean, the happy medium, etc."

"Pointing little applications at me while you do it."

"Your first extreme was to fancy mother a deep, still well, with springs of tenderness, which, if you could only reach 'em, would spout up fountains for you; was n't it?"

"Correct, Johnny. There's genius there."

"Hold up a minute. I've got a better one yet. You see if this does n't just hit it. She was an iceberg, a majestic iceberg, with a concealed heart of fire, (never mind natural philosophy,) and that fire might be made to burst out into a volcano for you."

"Better yet," said Jenny. "That's it exactly. That was just my idea of mother."

"And now," said John, "we are wiser. Now we have put all that childish folly away. Now we have the proud, beautiful iceberg minus the volcano, eh?"

"Right again," said Jenny.

"Well," said John, "you're not much better off

than you were before. You're only at another extreme. You'll have to drop your iceberg and all your other figures, and get her reduced down to a woman, before there's any hope for you."

"Hope of what?"

"Oh, I forgot," said John. "I'm to be all-sufficient in future. You're never to breathe vain sighs for the love of a beautiful but cold mother again."

"You don't seem particularly flattered by the honor."

"I have a cold-blooded way about me of not taking much on trust," said John. "It's a fault of mine to like proofs."

"You're horrid to-day," said Jenny. "Everybody's horrid, even Margie."

"Your voice sounds sobby, you goose," said John, changing his seat from the foot of the lounge to a chair at its head. "I shall come up here where I can pinch you if you get maudlin. Bless me if I don't believe I see a tear trying to squeeze its way out."

"You're very much mistaken," said Jenny. "My eyes are awfully weak since I got that stuff in them. I wish you wouldn't be so disagreeable when I'm sick."

"Well, I wont," said John. "I'll be real sweet and soft. But to resume. Of course I feel flattered to be the only object of your preference ; only it was rather hard for me to get it through my head that you ever could give up a thing you had undertaken so long as there was a way to accomplish it."

"A way?"

"Why, of course there's a way," said John. "Don't they say there's a way to everywhere? As long as you despise the way, and wont try it, all right. But I had a kind of an idea you would n't give up beaten, that's all. I argued on general principles, from what I've known of you for a good many years."

"Oh, if you mean soft-soap, I certainly have no idea of trying that," said Jenny.

"Of course with me it's different," said John. "I made up my mind long ago to take mother as she was, a fact of forty years' standing. I have n't regarded her as an iceberg, or volcano. I've simply regarded her as a woman filled up to the eyes with herself. She has n't a glaring vice, you know, that you can name, and challenge and go for. It's just a hopeless habit. As far as we can learn from relatives she developed a remarkable talent for

looking out for number one when she was n't much more than a baby ; and everybody has helped her cultivate it ; her father and mother, and our father, by always giving up to her.

“And there she was, a fact to accept and let alone—my way ; or to dress up in fictions and fret about, and be everlastingly disappointed in, and forced to accept at last—your way. Now it may be that there was a third and better way all this while. My conscience has pricked me to that effect sometimes. I have occasionally thought that it was n't just the thing to be on such terms with your own mother. You see if we'd been brought up together, Jen, we'd have got used to each other ; but she comes home set in her ways, and finds us set in ours ; and we all go on getting setter and setter every day.”

“It's her fault,” said Jenny. “You know it is. She could make everything right if she would.”

“Oh, you're considering her side yet,” said John.

“Go on,” said Jenny. “I'm anxious to hear what you can say.”

“I say,” said John, “that nobody ever got at her but in one way, and that's herself. Look

where Margie stands. There is nobody nearer that organ you politely call her heart. How did she get there? By petting and flattering; by being respectfully aware, when she's with mother, of the existence of a single individual on this terrestrial sphere: Mrs. Philip Stephens.

"Now I don't say the way is worth the pains. I'm not settled in my own mind about that; though I own I've considered both sides of the subject. All I maintain is that there is a way—which any one that was very anxious might try."

"I'd like to be good friends with mother, even yet," said Jenny. "But, John, I couldn't get down at her feet the way Margie does. Bah!"

"Nor I," said John. "It isn't in us. But I do suppose, Jen, we might improve on our present manners. I keep up this frigid indifference, mum as a dummy when I'm with her; and you favor her with genteel sarcasms and glances of high disdain."

"Not as much as I used to, do I, Johnny? I vowed I'd never say anything impudent, or snap my eyes at her again. I did think I'd managed to keep my teeth together pretty well."

"So you have," said John. "You've improved a good deal since you joined the church. But that

was only three months ago, and mother has n't been home but once before since then. Yes, you've shut your teeth together bravely more than once ; but it's all been spoken in your face, which is n't the same as flattery, by any means.

"As I said, Jen, it would be perfectly impossible for us to fawn and palaver ; but we might occasionally deal out a neat, little sensible compliment, so long as we do appreciate the fact that mother's a handsome woman. And then, Jen, we might *listen* ! Oh, what a martyr's crown we have to win."

"You need n't blame yourself there, Johnny. You've been a perfect miracle of a listener, to me. Think how you've sat it out many a time when I've been obliged to get up and leave the room."

"I can stand it just twenty minutes by the clock," said John ; "without word of encouragement or applause leaving my mouth. Just twenty minutes I can manage my face ; and then a yawn is sure as fate. But look at Margie. She takes it by the hour ; and her face all the time calls for more ; and she throws in little helpful suggestions and flattering comments. Whether she really does enjoy those everlasting yarns of mother's, with

herself as prime heroine—other characters just stepping in, you know, when somebody's needed to address a compliment to her—or whether she's good enough to put it all on, I can't tell."

"Margie is not only a good flatterer and listener, but she's a perfect delight to mamma's eyes too," said Jenny. "I believe she thinks she and Marg are the two people in the world worth looking at. Margie's effect is always pretty, you know. There's never anything about her, in dress or manners, to offend mother's awfully particular taste. She gets the latest styles by instinct, down to hairpins and shoestrings; and how she manages it is beyond me, for she has little enough money, with all that big family on her father's hands; and as for time, she's always tending babies out of school. Then Margie never says or does awkward things, you know, John. That's a great deal with mother."

"Who know what wonders your dress-reform may work?" said John. "Here's your way: Style, grace, listening, flattery. There's a certain place a certain person wants to get to; and how to get there without going in the way that leads there is what bothers her. Consistency, thy name is Jane."

Her powder had by this time taken such effect

that she was growing drowsy. She attempted a remark, but her mind dwelt weakly on the words, "Consistency, thy name is Jane." She frequently repeated them, vainly trying each time to take up the thread of the conversation from the last word, and go on.

John, seeing her condition, stopped talking ; and by-and-by stepped softly out of the room.

CHAPTER IX

WHEN she awoke her eyes met shadows and darkness; but growing accustomed to them, and with the help of the firelight, they soon made out a figure lying on the hearth-rug. When she stirred, the figure sat up.

"Awake, dear?" said Margie.

"Yes," said Jenny. "How long have I been asleep?"

"It's nearly six. I'm expecting your mother down every minute; but I wouldn't have the gas lighted as long as you were asleep. She was afraid she would n't be able to come down, Jenny. She was a little nervous and troubled about something when I went up. I think, from what she said, it must worry her not to be able to be with you when you're sick. But she let me comb out her beautiful hair, and that soothed her wonderfully. Your hair is like hers, Jenny."

"It's the only thing I inherit from her," said Jenny, reflecting as she spoke on the contrast be-

tween her interview and Margie's in that room up stairs.

"Yes," said Margie. "It's queer that neither you nor John look more like her. You had a nice nap, didn't you, Tommy? Do you feel a little better for it?"

"I think so, thank you. You need n't keep it dark for me any longer. I'm not fond of darkness, you know. What made you stay here, Prinky? You ought to have gone out somewhere till you found a bright, cheery place."

"Oh, I never mind the dark," said Margie; "and I wanted to be here just the minute you woke."

"The dark and your own thoughts," said Jenny. "You do n't mind either, and either one could drive me crazy. I was wondering this afternoon, Prinky, when I was left alone and having such a forlorn time with myself, how it is that some people's solitary thoughts are peaceful and happy."

"Why should n't they be?" said Margie. "It's natural, I think."

"That only shows what a difference there is in natures, if it's natural for you and not for me."

"What do you think about, Jenny?"

"Oh, for one thing, I think about the people that wont go to heaven, and wonder why God made them when he knew it, and I break my heart over them."

"I used to, too. But, Jenny, I think it's impertinent to wonder about God's reasons for such things, and of course it is very foolish. You can't possibly understand till you get an angel's mind. I used to break my heart over them; and a good way to cure yourself of that is to think about the troubles of people you can help. There are plenty of people right near you that it will do some good to break your heart over."

"You are sensible, as usual," said Jenny. "But I get dismal over myself too. I detest myself when I think me over. Not a thing have I done in the last three months, after all my professions."

"Why, Jenny, you did n't profess that you meant to turn the world upside down. I don't think you promised to do anything more than your plain duty. Haven't you done that?"

"I haven't had any duty," said Jenny. "I've been waiting for one to turn up. Oh, of course," she continued, seeing the surprise in Margie's face, "I've tried to be a little better natured, and to shut

my teeth down on my tongue when it got agitated. But that's all. There are n't any chances around here to accomplish anything. I've been waiting and waiting for one all this time.

"You know the 'Star,' Margie," she added presently. "That taught me better than to go out hunting for my own opportunities. I made up my mind after that that the best thing I could do was to wait at home for one to come to me."

"Don't speak of her," said Margie. "It makes me too provoked. The girls at school call her 'Jenny Stephens' Star' yet. They don't say much before me, though."

Jenny, in her first religious enthusiasm, had gone home every evening from chapel service with the injunction ringing in her ears to win a star for her immortal crown. She heard that particular form of speech so often, and it was so necessary for her to work off her zeal in some way, that, obedient to instructions, she deliberately selected her star, Bella Potter, whom the girls accused her of choosing on account of a weakness of intellect which would make her an easy prey. But Bella had proved quite equal to understanding Jenny's bold attack upon her. She had resented it, sent Jenny away crestfall-

en, and expressed her opinions freely. The consequences were Jenny's retirement to private life and Bella's nickname.

"Perhaps there is some great thing coming to you from way off, some time, Jenny," said Margie. "I have often thought you'd be a good one to give some of the great things to. But it does n't seem as if God could have left you without anything to do while you're waiting. It has always seemed to me as if your own home were the every-day work God had got ready for you—just as your mother used to fix your sewing, and your teacher plan your lessons, when you were a little girl and did n't know enough to choose work for yourself. Your part was just to do what you were told, and not waste time looking about. I've always supposed that God must have ready work in every home, and that it was laid out plainly for the people that lived there to do.

"But perhaps I've judged too much by my own. If I engineer the children safely through their little fights, and help them keep their tempers in order, and help mother so that she does n't get worn out, it takes every bit of the time I have for work. Once in a while I feel as if I'd like to do great things that

would show. But I suppose it is natural to feel as if the work that's planned for you, and you've got to do, is commonplace. Perhaps it does n't look commonplace to God.

"Your home is very different from mine, of course, Jenny. I ought n't to judge one by another. But are you sure there is n't anything to do here while you're waiting? Is n't there anything you can do for your mother?"

She was going on to say, "Or for John and the servants?" when the door opened to Mrs. Stephens. She did not look as if she needed anything done for her, as she came in, self-sufficient in her very carriage.

Margie jumped from the comfortable chair by Jenny's head.

"You shall have the post of honor," she said; "and I think this is the nicest chair in the room, too."

"Keep it yourself, dear," said Mrs. Stephens.

"No, indeed," said Margie, leading her to it with her arm around her waist, and seating her.

Jenny fancied herself playing that little part of Margie's.

"And how do you do now, Jenny?" said Mrs.

Stephens. "Angeline," she went on, not pausing a moment for Jenny's answer, "told me that she saw a physician coming in. Miss Goodrich was wise to send for him. It is always wise to put oneself at once in a physician's care. The doctor says it is perfect presumption for any one outside of the profession to give medicine. He says that only those who make a special study of such a delicate organism as the human frame ought to be allowed to have anything to do with it. 'Fancy yourself,' he says sometimes, 'attempting to understand your own exquisite network of nerves. How is it possible for one who has not the natural intuition, with the knowledge acquired by a lifetime of study and practice, ever to understand the intricate workings and apparent cross-purposes of such a peculiarly highly-wrought temperament as yours?'

"That is rather a big speech," she said, with a charming smile at Margie; "but I'm not responsible for it. I have quoted it literally, I believe. I certainly have heard it often enough to be able to."

Jenny choked a sigh, for she knew that was only the prelude to what the doctor said. But Margie's tender concern saved them from the rest. She

seemed much affected by Mrs. Stephens' allusion to her network of nerves."

"Does your head ache now?" she asked.

"Not more than usual, dear child," she answered, with a sweetness in her voice and a softness in her eyes that came there only for Margie.

Margie rose, stole behind her, and laid her hands on her forehead.

"What a soothing touch your dear little fingers have," said Mrs. Stephens, as they went roaming over her forehead, careful not to displace the hair which had been arranged, each lock with a purpose.

"Your forehead is as soft and smooth as the baby's," returned Margie.

"How different the touch of a lady's hand is from a nurse's."

"You will have to hire me to nurse you."

"I'm afraid that would spoil the charm," said Mrs. Stephens. "The difference is between the hired touch and the gratuitous."

"The loving!" said Margie; "the hired touch and the loving! Then if there weren't any babies I'd nurse you for love."

"Is your sweetness always to be thrown away on babies, dear?"

"Oh, I love them," said Margie quickly. "I'm never so happy as when I'm with the children."

"Then I shall have to be reconciled to Angelina, and an occasional favor from you."

"We'll train Jenny," said Margie. "I think I could teach her to like nursing."

"It's not an acquired taste, I believe," said Mrs. Stephens, in a voice that changed the subject.

"I'm going to run away a moment," said Margie.

There was a pause after she went; but Mrs. Stephens was too well-bred often to allow awkward pauses, and she found enough to say on the weather till Margie returned.

"See what I have stolen from the dinner-table," said Margie, when she came back, displaying a scarlet geranium. "And see where I'm going to put it, Jenny. There! Did you ever see anything more complete? It is just what was needed. Look in the glass, Mrs. Stephens. Isn't it lovely against that black braid?"

"It should be white, dear," said Mrs. Stephens, in allusion to the widow's mourning she still wore.

But she did not take it out. She obediently and

coquettishly lifted her chin and turned her face over her shoulder towards the mirror.

"It's a lovely flower," she said. "I can't speak as highly of the braid. You felt the lack of a scarlet flower the moment you saw me, and couldn't rest satisfied until you had it, you little artist. We shall hear of your doing great things some day; though I don't know," she continued, with an air of moral reflection, "that a woman can do a greater thing than make herself delightful to the eyes of those who love her. Do your family sit and stare at you all the time, little one?"

"Oh, no, Mrs. Stephens," said Margie, blushing violently. "I'm sure there's nothing to stare at."

Mrs. Stephens felt that another step would approach indelicacy; and besides, she had wandered away from herself quite long enough. So, folding her uplifted hands, and looking, with musing eyes and a smiling display of teeth, at the fire, she said,

"That reminds me of an old nurse I used to have—an affectionate, absurd creature. She fancied I was quite a beauty. 'Even a beetle is a beauty in the eyes of its mother,' you know, dear," (to Margie) "and she was very like a mother to me. And so from morning till night it was what she

overheard Mr. So-and-So say about my eyes, or hair, or teeth ; or Mrs. So-and-So about my dress, or bonnet, until I used to blush to meet people's eyes. This little one's pink cheeks and falling lids carried me back to those days. You must forgive my remarks, dear. I know from experience how awkward such remarks are."

"Then I ought to make endless apologies to you," said Margie. "But I can't help telling you what I think. I never thought of it's being rude before."

"My darling," said Mrs. Stephens, "if I had meant that, can you think I would have spoken as I did? One can only feel pleased and honored by the genuine admiration of a child, artlessly expressed."

There was a little pause, and she seemed to recall something she had forgotten to say :

"Of course I always believed that doting old creature's own brain was responsible for half the speeches. She thought of things she would like to have people say about me, and then fancied they said them."

"I'm sure she never made up a word," said Margie promptly.

"She used to put flowers in my hair, too," said Mrs. Stephens. "Perhaps that was one thing that brought her back to me. She had quite an eye for effect."

"You should always have flowers in your hair," said Margie ardently. "Could n't Angeline—"

"O dear!" said Mrs. Stephens, breaking into a merry laugh, and throwing up her hands, "don't mention Angeline and flowers in the same week!"

"But Jenny can, when you're at home, and when she gets well enough to think of any one besides herself, poor little girl!" She went over to her with one of her quick, quiet motions, and laid her hands softly and coolly on both sides of her face. "How her poor, dear, little cheeks burn."

The digression to Jenny did not please Mrs. Stephens. It threw her suddenly out of the soft and talkative mood she had been in.

"Jenny doesn't need any lessons on that," said Margie, as she took some of the fever out of her cheeks into her own hands. "No one can fix flowers like Jenny. They have such a wild, natural air, as if they were growing outdoors yet. Yes, she shall put flowers in the black hair every day, and learn how to nurse the pretty mamma."

"Then we would have a reconstruction, indeed," said the pretty mamma, in very mild and careful accents. But Jenny's fever heat rose at the words.

The dinner-bell rang presently. Jenny would not go out, and she positively refused to let Margie stay with her. When John came in she sent him away too.

"You'll promise not to have any dismal thoughts then, if I go, wont you?" Margie had said.

"I wont think at all if I can help it," Jenny had answered.

But she couldn't help it. Everything that everybody had said and done seemed to have had one tendency that day. Her mind took a review of the long, eventful hours since noon; and then it set itself at a deliberate task. It went picking up here and there the day's definite points, and grouping them—or rather they grouped themselves—around a central figure: the one word that was still her mind's perplexity and heart's burden, although she thought three hours ago that she had banished it for ever from both mind and heart. Mother, mother, mother, was the word that rang in her head, the theme of all her thinking, as she lay there alone.

"Is n't there anything you can do for your moth-

er?" She heard Margie's question often, and for its answer: "It has always seemed to me as if your own home were the every-day work God had got ready for you."

Had, then, her work been planned for her—as a teacher plans a lesson, or a mother a piece of sewing, for a child not wise enough to choose what it shall do—all these three months, in her little world within four walls? Had there been something that God wanted her to do for her mother, all this while that she had wanted her mother to do something for her? Had there been something to do for Miss Goodrich? and for dear old John?

He had not caught the enthusiasm of that time when so many of their friends, moved by the presentation of the Redeemer's cross, pledged Him love and service for the future. He was not moved as easily as Jenny. She had tried, feeling the gracious Presence in her heart, and praying for its continual abiding, to be gentler in her words and ways; and those who knew her best had seen that she did not altogether fail. But she had not done what she meant to do to win John over to the service—to show him what a worthy and honorable service it was; for she had been waiting, waiting all this time

for a great opportunity to come to her from the wide world, which should prove her valor and bring her renown.

And had she wasted three whole months, scorning God's little opportunities? Or—and it was a pleasant idea that came to her then—were God's definitions of words so different from hers that she had not known the magnitude of her opportunities? Did he sometimes see greatness where she saw littleness, and littleness where she saw greatness?

She thought how highly he must esteem the family names when he made use of them to interpret his own nature to human understanding, calling himself "Elder Brother," and promising to pity like a father and comfort like a mother.

She thought that God, when he set "the solitary in families," must have done it because he wanted them to have good times together—to comfort and help, and make each other happy; and that perhaps a single discord in a home was a wound to his own nature, for whose healing he asked of his disciples perfect patience in labor, and pride's crucifixion.

She thought that there must be in every happy home a likeness to his heavenly home that pleased him—a very germ of heaven's blessedness; for it

was a "family" up there, and he its Father, for whom the whole "was named." Did each harmonious home, she wondered, help on the reign of the universal peace that was to change earth to heaven some day? and was she commissioned to advance that reign by establishing peace under a single roof? and did she call it a little thing to do?

She had felt sometimes the subtle influence going out like a benediction in the air from happy homes. She thought that perhaps God only could know the far-reaching force and practical benefits of such an influence.

She did not forget Margie and her work, in her reflections. There were six little fiery boys and girls whom she was always cooling off, coaxing, and smoothing down; teaching them over and over, with marvellous patience—every day the same lessons—to love and forgive, to be more ready to blame themselves than each other; and taking pledges from them that when little tempests of rage upset their reasons, they would just shut their teeth together and count till the storm passed away. She could see now that it was not a small thing Margie was doing. It was not a small thing to send out into the world some day the influence of six self-

controlled, peace-loving citizens, where six antagonists of Christ's gentle kingdom might have gone forth instead.

And would it not be a great thing if she could make a unity of their little family trio which God would like to look at, and whose influence would have a silent blessing on the world?

But by-and-by Jenny's reflections took a very practical form. Her thoughts ceased to go roaming, and she found herself saying over the fifth commandment. She observed that it was an unconditional commandment; that it made no exceptions in favor of children whose parents it was hard to honor.

But the way! What a little way to God's great ends! Putting flowers in her mother's hair, listening graciously to her egotistic prattle, and praising her beauty! She did not like the way.

And yet she considered it gravely, and she talked about it with her Heavenly Father until he made it very clear to her mind that, small as it looked, it was his way.

She considered it in her mother's presence after dinner, feeling all its hard reality then.

And when, down by her bed, she had her even-

ing talk with God, she promised to begin right away the work which at last she saw he had ready for her to do.

Margie had jumped into bed, snuggled up to the wall, and begun the business of falling asleep, while Jenny was still at her prayers.

"Don't go off to sleep," said Jenny. "My head's as wide awake as morning."

She shook and pounded her, and then lay and thought a while; not unpleasantly now, for her mind was quite comfortable since she came to that understanding with God and promised to do his will. Still she liked human society, and she shook Margie again.

"Margie, Margie!"

"Hush—Rosie," she finally answered.

"My name's Jane Stephens, at your service. Do wake up, you lazy thing. How do you get yourself to sleep when you have headaches, Margie?"

"Say—your prayers," answered Margie, attempting to rise, but tumbling back heavily on the pillow. "Say your prayers—over and over. It's like—a charm;" and that was the end of her.

Jenny thought she might as well try her remedy; so she repeated the prayer she had said every

night of her life, "Now I lay me down to sleep," etc.; and when she came to the beginning of her own little appendix, "God bless my dear mother," she stopped. She said the prayer many times over before the monotony of its constant repetition and her powder together quieted her brain; but she never got any farther in the appendix than that first line, and went to sleep at last murmuring,

"God bless my dear mother."

CHAPTER X.

THE days went by; Jenny's face got its new pink skin, which gradually became a very nice shade for a complexion; her eyes grew strong again, and her cold disappeared, leaving no traces behind it but slight pains in her side and chest, and a little cough.

Mrs. Stephens never came down to breakfast, and Jenny seldom saw her except at lunch and dinner. Sometimes she was driving, for she ministered to the villagers' artistic tastes by at least a daily exhibition of herself in the open carriage; sometimes she was receiving and paying visits; and sometimes she was alone in her room, where of course Jenny never thought of intruding.

Jenny watched and waited patiently for an opportunity that should prove she had not mistaken God's appointed work for her; and though one did not come for many days, she did not give up her faith, for the more she talked with God and with herself about it, the more she felt convinced that she had learned his will.

She wanted opportunities while her zeal was fresh and impetuous ; and yet she had discovered, through her earliest Christian experiences, that a quiet, settled purpose is worth more than excessive ardor, which often dies suddenly of its own excess.

She nourished her purpose continually by prayer, and by exhorting herself to be of good cheer, and each morning awoke to hope and watch again, until Miss Goodrich came to her with news. Letters had been received from the doctor, she said, expressing concern at Mrs. Stephens' protracted absence from his supervision, and urging a speedy return. So the trunks were soon to be packed and the mistress was soon to depart.

"Going, not to come back perhaps for months !" said Jenny, with more sincere regret in her face than Miss Goodrich was quite able to understand."

Going, she thought, and taking her opportunities away. Going, to carry off the work God had given her to do. Going, and taking away her inspiration, her fervor, her courage, the poor little purpose that she had been cherishing so hopefully and patiently.

Could she keep it alive for months to come ? Was there any way of keeping it warm and strong ?

Could she nourish it day after day, for many days, on prayer?

It tired her to think of it. It would grow so naturally and easily by a little practice. It would be so hard to make it thrive on vague promises of something to do by-and-by.

But she determined, after deliberate counsel with herself and God, not to let it die; to make it live, if ever so feebly, until her mother should come home again. Meanwhile she thought God could not leave her without any work, and she would look about to find something to do for John, Miss Goodrich, or the servants.

She had hoped to be able to help Miss Goodrich with that mysterious business of hers, but had never succeeded since in getting her wrought up to the state of mind where she was willing to be confidential.

Letters from Bob Hall of Barnaby had come oftener than usual of late; and when Jenny inquired why, John only answered, "Business."

"Planning a visit for the next time I'm out of town, I suppose," said Jenny. "Or perhaps planning to get me out of town. Who knows but it's gone as far as that? I believe you two have de-

signs for making away with me. That wretch of a Dream-boy wants to get my share of the property! I've hit it at last! O Johnny, forgive me. I did forget my promise. He's the sweetest Dream-boy that ever lived."

The day after Jenny heard that her mother was going back to the water-cure, she was summoned to her room.

She was surprised when she went in to see Miss Goodrich sitting vis-a-vis with her mother, each erect and grave in a chair, evidently in consultation about her.

"Sit down, Jenny," said Mrs. Stephens.

There was a frigidity in her tones that did not make Jenny's heart beat with happy anticipations.

"Mrs. Barnard has made me a visit this morning," she said, "and told me that you have a cough and constant pain in your side and chest. Is it so?"

"Yes, mamma," said Jenny, tempted at first to equivocate, but seeing in Miss Goodrich's eye stern truth that she feared would betray her.

"Then instead of complaining to outsiders, why did n't you tell me, and let me consult a physician?" said Mrs. Stephens.

"I haven't complained to outsiders," Jenny burst forth, hardly allowing her mother time to finish her remark. "If they've had eyes—" And there she stopped, aware that her first opportunity had come.

Oh, what a flurry her thoughts were in! How many sarcasms her quivering tongue had ready to dash off! and how far beyond her apprehension was the kingdom coming of "peace on earth, goodwill toward men!" But she knew enough to stop herself, and she shut her teeth together and began to count, after the manner of those fiery little Barnards when their reasons were clouded for a season.

"If they have had eyes to see what your own mother had not the heart to see. Finish it, Jenny," said Mrs. Stephens. "Say all that you have to say about your mother; don't spare me; and then go away by yourself and think if you have been altogether a dutiful and loving daughter. Go and learn something from your friend Margie."

Jenny went on counting furiously, "Fifty—sixty—seventy—eighty," on to a hundred.

"Mrs. Barnard suggested that you had inherited your poor father's fatal tendency," said Mrs. Ste-

phens. "I cannot agree with her that your lungs are not quite strong. But one cannot be premature in consulting a physician; and if the doctor says that we have already waited too long, I shall feel that you have been at fault in not acquainting me with your condition.

"I have been thinking of going away at once," she continued. "The doctor urges me to return immediately. But I shall not consider myself now. I have told Miss Goodrich to have a dressmaker sent to me this morning, and I shall order what you need to be made in the shortest possible time, and when you are ready we will go."

"Where?" gasped Jenny.

"To the doctor, of course. I should not think of putting you under any one else's care."

"Not to the water-cure, mamma!"

"Certainly. Your distress is flattering. Does it seem such a hard thing to spend a short time with me?"

"There's a doctor here," said Jenny recklessly, too appalled by the awful prospect of being a water-cure patient to consider anything but her own peril. "I have had him. I think—I think he understands me better than any one else could, mamma."

"You had him twice," said her mother; "and shut yourself up, refusing him and his medicine, when he came the third time, I understand. After that you would hardly presume to call him again, I should think."

"I'm sure he'd be glad to come, ma'am, if I made all smooth," said Miss Goodrich. "He understands Miss Jenny; and was more amused than vexed, I do think."

"Besides," said Mrs. Stephens, "I have no faith in that practice. It's the old, barbarous, wholesale practice of a century ago. It is impossible for such a man as Doctor Alexander to have those intuitions of disease which make the doctor's cures seem almost miracles."

"You will go at once, please, Miss Goodrich, and send the dressmaker to me. I have nothing more to say to you, Jenny."

"Mamma!"

"We will have no further discussions," said Mrs. Stephens. "I am not well enough to bear anything more this morning."

Jenny went out the door with a miserable, vanquished feeling in her heart. She had had an opportunity to please her mother, and she had

offended her. Oh, if she only could have kept her face conciliatory and filial from the first, and not said one word—one single word—to offend! If she could only quietly and meekly have explained away her mother's misapprehensions, and expressed no surprise, nor displeasure, when she heard that a water-cure was her doom!

But she consoled herself by thinking that perhaps all those achievements were too much to hope for in the very outset; and that perhaps there was something she still might do—might do calmly and intelligently, now that her brain was cool. Perhaps her opportunity had not quite gone and left her without a victory. Perhaps on the other side of the closed door whose knob she held in her hand, there was something still that she could do. Her hope rose high; then her heart sank low. Face to face with her pride she felt what a monster it was to attack. For one weak moment pride's crucifixion seemed to her an impossible mortal achievement.

"Oh, help me to do it!" she whispered, with her eyes closed.

Then she opened the door.

"Mamma," she said, "I beg your pardon for the way I spoke. I'm sorry you think I've been talk-

ing to people. I haven't. I didn't know Mrs. Barnard thought there was anything the matter with me. I'm sure it isn't strange you didn't notice, for there wasn't much to notice. I've hardly any cough or pain."

The last words were unfortunate.

"It is too late to beg off, or discuss the state of your health," said her mother. "I have quite decided that the doctor shall see you, and will write him at once that you are coming."

"I didn't want to beg off," said Jenny, with trembling tones, for she felt quite discouraged. "I never thought of such a thing."

"Very well," said her mother pleasantly; but Jenny felt that her manner dismissed her.

She did not seem to have accomplished anything. But perhaps, she thought, it would prepare the way for better things; and perhaps God would look at the effort, too, as well as the consequences.

She went away sadly, and she found Miss Goodrich waiting for her at the foot of the stairs, looking up; her eyes brimming over, even to two drops, with compassion. "O Miss Jenny!" she said.

Her horror-stricken countenance turned Jenny's melancholy to mirth.

"It isn't a funeral yet, Goody," she shouted. "A water-cure may be the next thing to it, but you can't say it is one. Perhaps, though, Goody, you've got one on your mind, and that's the trouble. Have you already spied the hectic bloom on my pallid cheek? and do you detect an ominous hack in my daily bark?"

"How can you go on so, Miss Jenny?" said Miss Goodrich. "Levity don't become such subjects. But I could have laughed myself when Mrs. Stephens got talking about lungs! It all came from me; and no one knows better than I, who've nursed you all your life, what a good, solid chest you've got. Though that isn't to say that it's safe to let any kind of a cold run on. But one day I got worked up from your acting so hateful about Doctor Alexander, and I went on to Miss Margie, and don't know what I didn't say. I saw she looked scared; and there's no telling what she said to her mother."

"And you, then—you my professed, trusted, friend, you champion water-cure hater, you the deadliest mortal foe to Rubbers, you have done it! Through you I am to enter a water-cure in the debasing character of patient."

"That's the worst of it!" said Miss Goodrich. "If you'd heard me plead and argue and beg of your mother for half an hour before you came in, Miss Jenny! I never saw her so set. Her pride was cut up by Mrs. Barnard's speaking to her. I did my best, Miss Jenny. Can't you get out of it yourself?"

"Why yes, of course I can," said Jenny. "The evil one is tempting me to a way this very minute. You know, Goody," and there was a dangerous flashing in her eyes, "if I should say I would n't go, the whole world could n't make me."

"In that case," said Miss Goodrich, hope radiating from her face, "your mother might send for Mr. Peters to come down on the first train."

"So she might," said Jenny. "And he might happen to have a pressing engagement that would prevent his accepting, and write me a persuasive letter instead. 'Poor little man! I believe I'm responsible for his being 'no bigger than my thumb.' I've scared him out of a year's growth every time he's come down for an interview, Goody. Think how he must rue the day they made him my guardian! or put him on the same globe with me, either. He thinks, you know, that I'm a species of

hyena. I don't suppose you could make him believe that there's a woman's immortal nature inside of me. I gave him a wholesome lesson the last time he was down, that will keep him from meddling with my affairs again. They ought to have appointed your old doctor guardian, Goody. Maybe I'd have quaked before him. Do you know, I was rather disappointed that he went off so quietly the other day. I rather thought he'd break the door down, and we'd have some fun."

"Oh, how rude that was, Miss Jenny!"

"Was n't it?" said Jenny. "Horribly. I'd have him in a minute now, if I only could. It shows how virtue is its own reward, and *vice versa*—especially *vice versa*—does n't it?"

"Think what you'd have saved, if you'd only let him cure you!" said Miss Goodrich.

"Yes, think of it," said Jenny. "Is n't it aggravating! But, after all, I do think that a water-cure's a little more than fair pay for the offence. I don't think it quite deserved that much, Goody."

"You will—go—will you?" said Miss Goodrich.

"Go!" said Jenny. "Would you have me defy my own mother?"

"No, indeed!" said Miss Goodrich.

"O Goody, said Jenny, "that was just a trap to catch you in a story. I did n't think you'd fall in so easily. You old hypocrite! You'd have me defy mother and Granny Peters, and all other legal authorities, before you'd have me go. I know it. But I'm afraid I'll have to disappoint you, you poor old dear!"

"Why?" asked Miss Goodrich desperately.

"Because, Goody," she answered gently, walking away towards the library, "I'm not serving the evil one as much as I was."

But she could not enter the library and leave utter despair on the face behind her. So at the threshold she turned and said,

"Never you mind, Goody. I'll make that establishment glad to get rid of me. That doctor'll write my discharge in less than a week. And let a Rubber come at me if she knows what's good for herself!"

The wave of her fist and gleam of her eye cheered Miss Goodrich's heart as she went about her business.

It was not until Jenny was quite alone, with her mind dwelling thoughtfully on her new pros-

pcts, that she discovered in them a possible answer to her prayers, the opportunity she had been asking God to send. Then she told him that if, through being off in a strange place with her mother, she should be thrown more into her society and find the way to her love, she would thank him gladly for the little trials of her banishment.

CHAPTER XI.

"I wish Bob could see you now and get his first impression while that suit's fresh," said John at the dépôt. "I never saw you so stupendous. And your complexion's real pretty. How neat your hair looks too. And it is wonderful how much cold cream and gloves every night have done for your hands. Where'd you get that becoming little red feather?"

"Margie made me have it," said Jenny. "She's always wanted me to have one. I do n't wish that Dream-boy was here, Johnny. I do n't want him to come around while I'm gone. I wont have him consoling you. I want you to miss me dreadfully."

But no sooner had the train carried Jenny and her waving handkerchief out of sight than John, walking dolefully homeward, found the suggestion of comfort in her words. The Dream-boy *should* come and console him! He would send him an immediate invitation. So he dropped in at the nearest stationer's for paper and envelope and wrote:

"DEAR BOB : I'm alone again. Jenny off this morning. Can't you come down as soon as you get this and stay on indefinitely till her return? How about those plans? In hurry to catch the mail. Yours,

"JOHN STEPHENS."

And he received as soon as possible the answer :

"DEAR JACK : Plans are ripe. You may expect me to-morrow night at 10:10. More when I see you. Truly,

"BOB."

So it happened that in less than three days after Jenny's departure, the places she had made vacant were acceptably filled by her mysterious rival.

Not that there was anything particularly mysterious, or shadowy, or dreamy about Bob when once he was seen. On the contrary, he was rather inclined to fatness, and his cheeks went so far as a jolly rotundity. He had a well-kept, well-fed air, and it was evident that he had not lacked the sustenance of flattery, although he was rather agreeably than obtrusively complacent. He had just that degree of good-natured assurance which in a boy from seventeen upwards is apt to be winning. It had won the hearts of the Stephens establish-

ment, from Miss Goodrich down. He was as much at home in the house as if he were its lawful master, and took all the liberties of an old inhabitant.

"I've investigated from garret to cellar," said he to John, as he sat on the library table, with legs dangling and swinging, "and know everything that belongs to the house except the one thing I want to know most. If it was n't for Miss Goodrich's testimony, I'd give that sister of yours up as a hoax. I s'pose Miss Goodrich may be in the plot, though she has an honest cast of the eye. It is n't that I don't believe you're capable of the fraud, Jack; but I can't quite see your object in getting up that particular kind of a one. Now just tell me what good it's done you to make me think you had such a relation as a sister all this time. I'd like to know that."

As John persistently devoted himself to his apple, Bob was obliged to continue the conversation.

"Show me any evidences and you may persuade me yet," said he. "As I tell you, I've made friends with the house from top to bottom, and not found a trace of her. All your fancy-work is the latest style of half a century ago. There is n't anything

that looks as if there were girls and needles around. You can tell whether there's a girl in the house, her age, complexion, and character, from the tidies. But the total lack of tidies here says to my mind, total lack of girl. I've only to see her picture to accept the evidence. But you wont show me one, except that portrait in the parlor of a chuckle-headed baby; and for all I know it may be any other baby that was ever born into the family."

John was approaching the core, and he lingered on it, looking quite absorbed, as if he had never had a thought beyond apple-cores.

"I've hunted for a work-basket," said Bob; "but perhaps she keeps them all in her room, though a girl generally has one for each room in the house. Show me her work-basket, Jack, if you want to convince me. Show me her work-basket, and I'll try and explain away lack of tidies and photographs, and I'll tell you her character from it too. You can read even more in a work-basket than in a tidy."

"I will!" said John, with a hearty compliance that rather astonished Bob.

He tossed the apple-core in the grate and hastened away—hastened up the stairs and to the door

of Miss Goodrich's room, where he knocked, and receiving no answer, let himself in. He looked about till he saw what he wanted, and then turned around and went back to the library, bearing a huge basket in his arms.

Its fabric was coarse and yellow, and it was lined with a particularly hideous shade of red, and it was filled with every useful implement which a house-keeper could need as she sewed. There were cards of agate buttons, skeins of brown and black linen thread; then there was a big, scalloped cake of beeswax, and a pair of shears qualified by size and substance to do deadly business. A bunch of shoe-strings had its appointed place in a little bag, and poked out its brass heads in shining array. There was a scarlet tomato pincushion, whose peculiar shade against the solferino lining was sickening to see; and a strawberry emery in still another shade of red—a good likeness of the fruit in a ripe stage of decay. The needle-book was a delicate purple, whose tint, with the reds and greens, made altogether an appalling combination. Miss Goodrich's fancy-work, a blue-yarn sock knitted as far as the heel, lay carelessly on top of a dish-towel which was awaiting hemming.

The basket looked sufficiently hideous to John, but he had not a good eye for details, and he was in too much of a hurry to pause and remove an article. He ran down the stairs and laid his trophies triumphantly at Bob's feet.

"Oh!" said Bob.

John had certainly got the best of him; but it was a victory dearly bought—bought at the price of every good opinion he had had of the mysterious sister. Bob had a very good eye for details!

This, then, was the kind of girl she was. This accounted for the lack of fanciful achievements, wrought by dainty needles, which he had felt all over the house. This accounted for John's stubborn silence. No wonder he had not wanted to talk about her, poor fellow. No wonder he had always spoken of her worth in general terms, and obstinately declined discussing details. She was worthy, undoubtedly—a good, heavy, plodding creature; but what a sister for the boy! Sensible in them not to get her picture taken, for there was no telling but she might be squint-eyed; no, near-sighted. That kind of girl was always near-sighted, and blinked at you through eye-glasses. Very likely she had the snuffles, and talked through her

nose when she aired her opinions and requested you to explain your jokes ; for of course she had opinions to air, and would not receive a joke without mathematical demonstration.

He saw no indications in the basket of a bad temper. She was probably as good-natured as she was thick-headed—dead flatness, stupid amiability, which went for saintliness with half the people. And John was just the one to be fooled. He boasted of knowing nothing about any girls but Jenny. It was his pride never to have had a flirtation. No wonder he had n't wanted to try his hand at it, if he got his ideas of girls from her. Of course she had made him think it was the chief of maidenly accomplishments to keep your brother mended. John always did look as if that basket had been at him. Bob remembered having noticed how soon his holes got mended after they came. She was the girl who took the stitch in time to save nine. What a girl for a sister !

Poor old Jack ! Bob did not blame him for always asking him there when she was away. He'd keep her out of sight as much as possible if she were his sister. But he saw where the whole mischief lay. He had freely told John more than once

what he thought a woman ought and ought not to be. He distinctly remembered having described his ideal to John in the beginning of their acquaintance, and how cautiously John had led him on, sounding him with cross questions. He had felt no restraint in expressing his opinions, because he had assumed that John's sister must be all that John's sister should be. It had never entered his head till to-day that she could be otherwise than charming. All the compliments he had paid his ideal in John's presence he had thought, of course, were reflecting upon Jenny.

And yet what was more common than to see such glaring differences between members of the same family? How rashly he had jumped at conclusions. Jack's fondness was what had fooled him, for certainly Jack was amazingly fond of her by his own statements. How much a matter of neighborhood half the fondness was, any way, he reflected—mere result of contact.

"It takes you a good while to read her character," said John, watching Bob, with folded hands hanging between his knees, and eyes bent toward the basket.

He was trying just then to compose a speech



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that should neither be black hypocrisy nor hurt John's feelings. He had almost rounded a nice period when the rim of an eyeglass in one of the basket's little bags caught his notice, and confirmed his worst suspicions. He groaned inwardly, and waited a moment.

"That's what you promised me, you know," said John: "her character from the basket. Come, time's up."

"You never told me," said Bob, in sweet tones that came straight from his compassion, "that she wore glasses."

"No?" said John. "Did I forget to mention it?"

"There's nothing like having a sister that'll keep your clothes in order," said Bob cheerfully. "Practical turn of mind, has n't she? One of your solid, sensible sort?"

"That's it," said John. "Go ahead."

"You know," said Bob, feeling his position to be very painful, "I've never been able to get a word out of you about her. You've made the general statement that she was splendid, and I've had to form my own notions on that."

"Yes," said John.

The grave, pensive concern in his face would have deceived the most suspicious; and Bob certainly was not at all suspicious, for this work-basket seemed to him now a reasonable solution of all the mystery about Jenny.

"You haven't told me how she looks, Bob," said John. "I suppose you can see her face in the basket, too."

"I see eye-glasses," replied Bob bravely, "and infer that she's near-sighted. Almost every one is nowadays."

"It's strange what a general complaint it's getting to be," said John. "You could almost think it's contagious, like smallpox. Well, you have n't told me how she looks."

"Glasses give a woman a substantial, intellectual appearance," said Bob. "There, I've gone as far as I can. I'll wait for the rest until you gratify my impatience and let me see her, old fellow. I should say her most striking point was the point of a needle. Now I'm done."

"Yes," said John enthusiastically, "just imagine her with the weapon always in hand, darning, or hemming, or stitching for some one besides herself, curving her poor little spine or pricking her poor

little fingers on shirts, dresses, or pantaloons, for some of her paupers. No wonder she doesn't get time for fancy-work! That poor little forefinger, all stabbed and rough from an everlasting needle! Now are you surprised that I claim she's the best sister out, and that words fail me there?"

His voice trembled so naturally as his eyes sought the floor that Bob was moved to believe there might be real beauty of character even in the homely owner of that homely basket.

"Poor little Jenny!" said John. "It's too bad she's got weak eyes. If she'd only just obey orders! But I can imagine her hiding from the doctor and stitching away at blue overalls for some miserable pauper or other."

"All the goodness in the family seems to have run in one direction," said Bob.

"Well now I'm not such a bad fellow," said John. "Though I won't claim to come up to Jenny's ideas of propriety."

"I should hope not," said Bob to himself, "or none of your friendship on my plate, if you please."

Aloud he said: "Does she write sonnets, or short tales, Jack? Young ladies of her style generally have some literary taste."

"Why I don't like to brag of my own sister," said John. "But almost every one's seen the little verses that come out now and then in all the country papers under the signature of 'Dotty.' Haven't you ever happened to come across any of them?"

"Oh yes : 'Dotty,'" said Bob. "Yes!"

"I rather like this verse," said John. "It's not exactly festive, but there's a kind of power about it. Do you remember it?"

"What is my life?
What is my doom?
Life is a mad strife;
My doom, the tomb!"

He couldn't resist the temptation to look up. The mixture of helpless credulity, commiseration, and disgust on Bob's face was too much for him; and though he made an effort to be calm, there was a telltale gurgle in his throat.

"It's a game!" yelled Bob.

"Oh my!" said John, his ecstasy bursting out into explosions of laughter that left him lying back in his chair as weak as a baby.

But weak or not, Bob was too furious to be a

generous foe ; and he flew at him and boxed him, scientifically but mercilessly.

"Let up!" said John. "Give me a chance to get my breath! That's the best one out! I'll have to write to Jen to-night. Oh well, if you want to fight, come on!"

There were no more words after that. There was some loud laughing, and there were shrieks and roars ; but there were principally boxes on the ear, slaps upon the cheek, well-aimed blows from cultivated fists at various parts of the body. There were twists of tricky feet that would trip up ; and there was a heartiness of embracing that quite out-did the usual method of expressing affection. Then there was the overthrowing of an inkstand, the upsetting of several chairs, and a reckless disregard of furniture generally.

Boot-heels came clattering down the stairs. A rush across the hall, and enter Miss Goodrich, eyes bulging and face scarlet.

"At it again!" screamed she. "I heard you! There that inkstand is over! I knew I'd be too late to save it. How many chairs have you broken? I can tell you one thing : if you smash that chandelier again you'll pay for it out of your own

pockets. How on earth did my work-basket get here? Well!"

"Oh, the work-basket!" screamed John. "Don't say work-basket to me! Goody, I've got the best one! I'll tell you—"

"You will, will you?" said Bob, slapping his hand over his mouth.

"If you don't stop I'll call the constable! I will!" said Miss Goodrich, boldly rushing upon the pair, with a view to separating them. "I won't have everything in this house destroyed!—and I mean it!—as long as I've kept it!—and had good order, too, till Mr. Hall stepped foot in it!"

"Oh now, Goody," said Bob, actually brought to terms by her strategy, "don't go back on me that way! Haven't we always been the best of friends? I leave it to your own conscience if we haven't always been the best of friends."

It was evident that a soft place in her heart was touched. She tried not to be mild of tone as she answered,

"You'll do very well when you keep yourself under lock and key; but when you go to tearing and bellowing round like a wild bull—that a'n't the kind of friends I'm partial to."

"Hit me again if you want to, John," said Bob, dropping into a chair. "Thrash me unmolested. Here's my other cheek. I'm a man of peace from this hour. Only mind you do n't tell that joke! Mind you do n't tell Miss Goodrich that joke! I mean it!

"How much are damages this time, Goody? Give me the bill. I'll send it to my father. That tablecloth's done for. It's lucky the ink didn't get on the books, or the floor."

"It was an old rag," said Miss Goodrich kindly, as she took it off. "I've darned it and rubbed out spots till there's nothing of it but mended holes, and holes that ought to be mended, and more holes just coming. We needed a new one badly enough."

"The chairs seem secure," said Bob, going around and examining their legs. "How's the work-basket? Any damage there?"

"Not as I can see. What's it doing here? That's what I want to know?"

"And that's our little secret," said Bob. "Don't press the question, please. Only do say that you forgive me, and we're friends again, before you go."

"Sho!" said she contemptuously, as she went out the door, embracing her basket.

But Bob had seen a friendly twitching at the corners of her mouth, and that was all he wanted.

"Only do say that you forgive me and we're friends again," repeated John meekly, reaching out a trembling hand to Bob.

"Just drop it, if you please," said Bob. "All I ask is that you'll shut up on that subject, and remember that I'm going to be even with you yet. Come on outdoors. The air of this room makes your fists tingle for a blow."

So John said nothing more to Bob of Jenny or the work-basket on that day or the next ; but on the third day, Bob, ignoring the episode of the work-basket, himself introduced Jenny.

"One thing's plain enough," he said, "and that is that your sister's dodging me. She's made up her mind to be down on me. Not that I blame her, you know. I'm the first rival she's ever had, you say, and it's natural she should n't like it."

"I never paid you the compliment," said John. "She stands unrivalled. I always told you plainly you were only second fiddle."

"Then it certainly is n't her place to be jealous," said Bob. "But she has some reason for avoiding me. The more she skips out of the way the more

anxious I am to see her, of course. Knowing something about the ways of the sex, Jack, if she was n't your sister I might suspect it was a little dodge to get me interested."

John was not often roused to anger towards a friend ; but he turned and looked at Bob as he sat up pompously in his chair, with the air and expression of a lady-killer, and he felt an unwonted flush creeping up his cheeks.

"It is not only because it is my sister you make that remark about, but for your own good, that I take it up," said John. "You've got just one weak streak, and if you do n't look out it'll make a noodle of you yet. I should think a fellow with all your strong points would be above spoiling by female palavering. But the way you swallow their flattery down is something I can't make agree with the rest that I know about you."

Bob looked at him in perfect amazement, too stunned to speak.

"You see, you're one of the kind that everybody takes a fancy to at first sight. I told you I was struck of a heap myself the first time I saw you. Perhaps if girls gushed over me I might set up as a lady-killer too ; but somehow I hate to see

it in you, Bob. And you might as well know that my sister is n't one of the sort you're used to. I just advise you not to try any of your nonsense on her, if you don't want to get squelched."

"I think the squelching's been done pretty successfully by her brother," said Bob stiffly. "You may knock me down with a feather if I meant any incivility to your sister. I beg your pardon, and stick to it I did n't."

"Of course you did n't," said John. "You've just got in the way of those speeches. It's nothing but habit. I do n't like the habit."

"Sorry to offend your tastes," said Bob loftily.

But they talked it out after that. They were too good friends to let any difference of feeling or opinion grow unpleasantly between them, and they came to a fair and comfortable understanding on the subject. But they banished Jenny from their conversation again for a season.

And when next Bob took up her name, he said musingly, as they sat together late one evening, holding a bedtime conference,

"If I haven't seen her actually, Jack, I've got her right in my eye. I know just what a gentle kind of face your sister must have, and what soft,

taking manners. I can just see the trim, graceful air there is about her. If there's one thing that goes against me it's an ungainly, slipshod girl. I can't stand a girl that's boyish, and sloppy about her dress, and slangy. Can you?"

"No-o!" said John. "Yes, I remember your giving me your views when I first knew you. They made quite an impression. You sent me some poetry once in a letter that rather put your ideas in shape. Remember it?"

"No. What was it?"

"Some business about man's being for

"‘Valor formed ;

For softness she, and sweet attractive grace.’"

"Oh, yes ; I got that out of our Parser—extracts from ‘Paradise Lost,’ you know."

CHAPTER XII.

JOHN and Jenny had agreed to send full accounts of their doings to each other while they were separated, in the form of weekly letters, as long and detailed as possible, which should serve for daily consolation until a fresh arrival.

John had been persuaded to take Jenny's place as teacher of the kehoe-club exercise in her absence ; and his letters were chiefly notes on Margie's progress or otherwise, bulletins of the weather, and sometimes, when he was desperate for items, lists of the edibles they had for breakfast, dinner, and tea. He remembered her parting injunction about the Dream-boy, and did not mention him at all in his letters, waiting to have it out face to face.

Now Jenny was never obliged to resort to such a topic as the weather. She had plenty of items, and her only trouble was that when she began a letter it seemed as if she would never get through.

This is the first one that John received :

"DEAR JOHNNY : It's a whole, long week. Have

you missed me? But sentiment will come in better at the close, wont it? So business, to begin with.

“Arrived safely— There, you knew that by my sending you a letter. I’ll try again.

“Well, Johnny, I had quite a remarkable journey. Mamma talked all the way, and I listened sweetly. Yes, I did. I had practised a smirk in front of the glass the night before I came away, and I got my mouth fixed in it so that when mamma finished talking I could hardly get it out. It was four hours, you know. Pretty long for one smirk. I pretended all the way that I thought it was a regular spree to go to a water-cure; and I asked mamma about the doctor and patients, and the things they do, as if I cared. You might almost have thought I was Margie if you’d seen how well I succeeded.

“Every once in a while I caught a glimpse of myself in the lookingglass at the end of the car. Sometimes it was accident; but more times, I own, I nearly twisted my neck off to get a peep. I just liked to look at myself, I looked so nice. Do you know, Johnny, I don’t so much blame mother for not wanting to look at me when I used to be ‘slop-

py.' I'll never be sloppy any more. I've kept up this style ever since I came. I foraged in Goody's work-basket before I left home, and got a supply of needles and thread; and every time the least bit of a hole appears, or a button pops off, I go for it on the spot. I have to braid my hair over every little while, all day, to keep it in order. It is wickeder than ever. It acts as if it had seven little imps in it, the way it twitches and curls and tangles and rumples. But I do n't let it get the best of me.

"I'm a puzzle to mother. To see me always neat and nice—and stylish!—taking an interest in my clothes, and asking her which ribbon she'd advise me to wear, is too much for her.

"She does n't seem a bit ashamed to introduce me to all these strangers as 'My daughter.' And between you and me, I do n't see why she should be. I think I look nice enough now for the President's daughter.

"Johnny, I firmly believe—and I have good reason for it in my heart—that my coming here just happened so that I could have this chance with mother. I would never have got the chance at home to make things better between us. But here, where I'm a stranger, she has to have me in her

room quite often ; and when I'm there we can't sit like sticks without saying a word. So she talks, in the same old strain, of course ; but my manner is as different from what it used to be as my clothes are. I declare, I do the listening and smiling and commenting almost as well as Margie herself, though of course it has n't become natural to me yet. I have to try my hardest every time. No, not my hardest *every* time. It gets easier with practice.

" Sometimes mamma looks at me as if she did n't know whether I were putting this all on, and had some deep object back of it, or not.

" I don't flatter her much, Johnny. That comes harder than the listening. But I have got off a few little compliments. They're like fire-crackers to her ears, though, and I think it's rather dangerous to try them. They seem to rouse her suspicions, and I must begin easily there.

" I do n't put flowers in her hair yet, either ; but I'll be sure and let you know of the first one. And now I'll stop telling you what I do n't do, and tell you what I do do. I read to her. She says I have a nice voice, Johnny. So I sit by the hour reading twaddle. Oh, how sick I've got of novels. I do n't think mother cares for them ; she has too much

brains; only her mind has got into a lazy kind of habits, and she does'n't like to bother to fix it on anything that takes much attention. I proposed to read Shakespeare to her the other day; but she said he was 'too heavy.' How can anybody have the heart to call my dear old Billy heavy?

"Is n't it the best joke about the doctor? Oh, I forgot I had n't told you. Here I have been in his domains a week, and never seen his majesty—for the best of reasons: he is n't here. He was called out of town to a very 'dangerous' patient the morning of the day we came. She's got over her crisis now, and he's coming back to-morrow. I'll have richness to write you after my first interview. I suppose it will have to be bloody. I hope it wont make me fall way back in mother's esteem.

"I must tell you how it looks here. It's the longest building you ever saw—I mean long both ways. I might as well call it big, and done with it. But, Johnny, what I mean is, that wherever you stand you can't see the end. The halls go on and on and on and on. And the walls are very low. The ceilings seem as if they were coming right down on your head, and it gives you such a smothered feeling all the time. Can't you imagine how

it would, to have these fearful lengths of lowness back of you and before you? The rooms are quite pleasant, because there's a window to each room; but the halls, with no windows except at their ends, and so much length and lowness, seem like a multiplication-table of forlornity.

"Oh, I went right off from the joke on the doctor to the halls. The joke is, that what cough I had is gone. An assistant doctor gave me some little tasteless white powders—chalk or corn-starch, I could n't tell which. Mamma thinks they cured me; but I give change of climate the credit. Anyway, I'm perfectly well, and I'm anxious to see what the doctor'll do about it. Mother wont let me go home till he comes, though she can't help believing I'm well. I think, Johnny, he'll give me a 'base.' You must know, my dear, that we all have bases to our brains. I never realized the fact before. How ignorant one can be, and live in the world for fifteen years. If you have no cerebro-spinal sensations, cultivate them at once. You are quite out of style. You are miles behind the times.

"We have our rules here, Johnny. Each patient has the code of laws on a big yellow card, tacked upon the inside of his or her door. And rule num-

ber one, *the* rule of the establishment, whose penalty is the doctor's tenderest reproach, is that you shall not mention your diseases to each other. Patients are strictly forbidden to tell and compare symptoms, or to engage in any conversation whatever about their own bodies.

"Of course you know the consequence: they don't talk about anything else; and if they come here perfectly well, they can talk themselves into any disease that they or the doctor may particularly fancy. He was a cunning man when he made that rule the first and strictest. It brings him in a regular income. That's what I call business talent, Johnny. Whether the patients call on us, or I call on them, in their rooms or our rooms, I hear the same talk all the time; and there is never a great deal about lungs, liver, etc. 'Base' is the pet weakness here. 'Base' is the rage of the season. That doctor, if I drive him into a corner, will say my brain has got a base, you see if he doesn't. He's had the bottom knocked out of his; that's what's the trouble.

"There's no end to the bells here. There's a lying-down bell every morning, when, no matter what you're doing, you've got to drop; and a wa-

king-up bell, and a getting-up bell, and a resting bell and a bathing bell and a walking bell, and bells for raving over the doctor, and comparing 'bases,' and all the other business that goes on. Rave over the doctor! Johnny, you ought to hear them! It makes me sick. I don't believe I'll think he's quite such a saint. The remark is very common here that the doctor can do no sin; he lives so far above the world. Just wait! We meet to-morrow!

"The Rubber is such a good one that she finds plenty to do outside of our room, and mother lets her go. I couldn't stand it if she were all the time around, the way she used to be at home.

"You mustn't think I am very unhappy, Johnny. You know I have an object, and that keeps me up. I don't get on very fast in the beginning, of course. And yet when you think that it's only a week, and I sit with mother most of the time, and read and talk to her, and she likes to have me, why that does seem a good deal to have accomplished in the time, doesn't it?

"And you mustn't think I am very lonesome, Johnny; because you know who else has this object with me; and I have to talk to Him a great deal about it—every hour of the day to keep myself

fresh for work—and that makes Him seem nearer to me, and more my own friend, than ever before. Johnny, isn't it wonderful when you think of it, that He will be the friend of a girl like me, and let me talk to Him about little bits of things whenever I feel like it?

“No, Johnny, I am not very unhappy and lonesome; but after all I miss you dreadfully. Now sentiment comes in. I'm almost through. Do you miss me? Do you get real wretched and forlorn for me? or has that Dream-boy dared to come and comfort you? Bar the doors! Don't you ever let him in! You must be as miserable as possible. How I wish you could drop a tear!

“Give my love to everybody, especially Goody, please. But don't tell what morsels I send them, and what lots and lots to you. Good-by, Johnny.”
“JENNY.”

This is the second letter that John received:

“DEAR JOHNNY: He came, he saw—you shall judge for yourself whether he conquered or not.

“He sent for me, and I went down; and there, sitting up in a chair by the desk, I saw a smile. Nothing else at first; but in a moment I discovered that it had whiskers all around it, bushy, black



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ones, and that it had heavy eyebrows and a pair of spectacles.

"It got up and slid across the room like an eel, and shook my hand with a soft, clammy paw ; and then it said something about being glad to welcome me. It had just the voice you'd expect a smile to have. But the Rubber's is so much like it that I wont stop to describe it. I saw, though, that his was the original, and hers the copy. His sets the example for the establishment.

"The doctor thought that smile would do the business ; but stiffness was nothing to my manner, and ice can't express it.

"Smile and voice together he didn't believe any woman could resist ; but I sat up in my chair with a look that I think may have shaken his faith in himself for a moment.

"'And what does the trouble seem to be?' he asked mellifluously.

"Now that was generous of him, wasn't it, to let me choose my own? But there wasn't any pet disease that I craved, so I let him know that I was perfectly well. You should have seen the unconcern with which he passed my little statement by, and asked me :

“‘Loss of appetite?’

“‘No, sir!’ I answered.

“‘Imagine his soft, coaxing tones; and my mad roar all through this conversation.

“‘A sense of exhaustion?’

“‘No, sir!’

“‘Difficult respiration, perhaps?’

“‘No, sir!’

“‘Nausea?’

“‘No, sir!’

“‘Is there a dull languor in the head?’

“‘No, sir!’

“‘A disinclination for active pursuits?’ brightening a little. Think of that question to me!

“‘No, sir!’

“‘Are the pulses quickened under excitement?’

“‘No, sir!’

“‘Is there a distaste for society, and a feeling of lassitude?’

“‘No, sir!’

“‘Sharp, shooting pains in the limbs?’ persuasively.

“‘No, sir!’

“‘But a constant dull ache between the shoulders?’

“‘No, sir!’

“‘Is there throbbing in the lower part of the head, accompanied by pain?’—hopefully.

“I knew what symptoms he was getting at finally.

“‘No, sir!’

“‘Then,’ said he—and, Johnny, he had me. His cool impudence conquered me. I couldn’t help taking off my hat to him. ‘Then,’ said he in the most brisk, decisive voice—a perfect settler of a tone—‘it is the base of the brain.’

“And he whisked over to his desk, and began to put up powders, and he came back and handed them to me—and I took them!

“There was victory in his eye. There was defeat in the very hang of my clothes, and shuffle of my feet, as I went out.

“The way he keeps it up, and talks to mother in my presence about the throbbing and pain at the base of my brain—which, you know, I distinctly told him I did n’t have—and alludes to my cerebro-spinal tendencies, and discusses symptoms I never felt in my life, is something sublime. I can’t say a word, I’m so lost in wonder and admiration.

"I take his powders regularly—the very same chalk, or corn-starch, the other doctor gave; and I don't know but he'll persuade me yet that they're working a magical cure on a disease I never had.

"I must leave you in a minute because mamma wants me. Think of her sending word that she wants me to come and entertain her! But she has allowed me a little time, to finish; so I will say the rest as quickly as possible.

"Mamma has never spoken of the change in me until the other day. She has only looked what she felt before. But two or three days ago, when I was going out of the room, she said,

"‘I quite feel as if I had a daughter at last, Jenny.’

"I was so surprised that all I could say was,

"‘Yes, mamma.’

"She did n't seem to want anything more of me, so I went out.

"But the day after that I was sitting by her, and she gave me a very hard look, and said,

"‘Jenny, I really feel that I must commend you. I have always hoped that some day your eyes would be opened to the evils of selfishness. There is nothing so unlovely in a woman as selfish-

ness. That fault in your character has troubled me. But if you are really determined to conquer it, I am sure you will succeed.'

"What do you think I answered? 'I hope so, mamma'—just as meekly. But I went out of the room very soon after. That speech was too much for me to tackle in her presence. I had to get used to it alone. Johnny, don't you think I'm improving wonderfully?"

"Suppose any one should ever get hold of my letters to you; what a conceited mummy I would seem! But, Johnny, I never could do a good thing in my life, without getting you to praise me, could I?"

"Here comes the Rubber again. Think of being in such demand for mamma! I mustn't write but one word more, and that's good-by. Your loving

"JENNY.

"P. S. I can't let this go without settling Goody's mind. Be sure and tell her how I stand with the doctor, and that the Rubbers keep their distance. Tell her I am staying here for mamma."

CHAPTER XIII.

THIS is the letter which John received at the end of the third week.

“DEAR JOHNNY: Do n’t you dare say another word to me about the weather and what you have for dinner! If there is n’t any news make up some, or fill in with questions. I’ll answer those I have on hand.

“You keep asking me when I’m coming home. When mamma sends me. I feel sometimes as if I must go; but then I think I might lose all my opportunities, and perhaps I ought n’t to want to go. I have thrown out hints once or twice; but mamma has turned the subject right away.

“Then you ask me how I can possibly stand it here. You must n’t forget, Johnny, Who helps me and keeps me company while I’m away from you. Though you must n’t think any the less that I do n’t miss you dreadfully and want to see you all the time. But I get more and more interested in my object. Oh, Johnny, I am so glad that you and Margie ever put it into my thoughts.

"You ask me if I do anything for fun. Yes, I spend an hour in the gymnasium, all by myself, every day. They wanted me to go in at the regular exercise hour. But that I *wouldn't*.

"I wish you could see this gymnasium. There's no end to the machines—every kind of patent lifter and shaker you can imagine: foot-pullers and arm-jerkers and neck-twisters and spine-wrenchers. They are worked by steam; and when they all get going together—each patient on his own particular rack—you can think of nothing short of the Inquisition. The floor feels like a billowy sea under your feet; and the noise is enough to demoralize a sound nervous system—not to mention a weak one!

"But, as I said, I don't go there as a patient, though I occasionally peep in to see the fun. I agreed with the doctor and mamma to take my own hour every afternoon when the coast was clear.

"As a proof of my thorough reform let me tell you that I put on a gymnasium suit whenever I exercise—not so much for comfort as to save my own clothes. You can remember the time not very far back, when I'd climb a tree in my best silk, can't you?

“And then, Johnny, when I get in there, oh what fun! over and under bars, turning somersets in the air, swinging up to the ceiling on those iron rings; jumping, vaulting, racing, tearing, twisting myself like an eel—I’m so happy!

“You don’t mind, do you? I don’t think it spreads my hands; and as for my waist—it can’t be any bigger. Besides, remember what Mrs. Barnard and Margie say about Venuses.

“That, Johnny, is all my fun. I take long walks every day; but I miss you more than any other time, because we always used to go together.

“One day I asked the champion walker of the establishment to accompany me. She’s a girl that can actually get off from a creep sometimes; but she wouldn’t do for me. I kept losing her, and having to go back and pick her up. I’d succeed in crawling along with her a few minutes, and the first thing I knew I was shooting off again, and then back I’d have to come for her. You can tell a patient a mile away—only they never get a mile away from anywhere—by the walk. There’s an unmistakable waddle. They act as if their feet were tied up in bags. It’s like a sack-race—all of them racing to see which can make the slowest time, you know.

“Walking reminds me of a confession I had it on my mind to make to you in the other letters. I hope you won't be shocked; but you wouldn't want your sister to die the death of a starving prisoner, would you?

“Johnny, you know my appetite. I needn't enlarge on its dimensions. There are, I am aware, refined natures that can thrive on ‘airy nothings;’ but give me dinners, or I die! Mamma gets along very well here, because she never needs much to eat; and what she does want she orders and has prepared by her own special Rubber. But I am driven to extremities.

“So, ‘whene'er I take my walks abroad,’ I go to a nice clean little restaurant and buy my dinner. I have to go through a form here, and that sharpens my appetite, by laws of repulsion. Mother often keeps me a long while after dinner, and when I fairly get started I'm in that state sometimes that I have to use moral suasion with my teeth all the way to keep them from devouring trees and fences; and nothing but family pride restrains me from drinking the hot soup the waiter brings me down in one gulp. That makes me think of a soup story I've got to tell you.

"The waiters evidently consider me a standing joke. I suppose the prison-starved look shows plainly in my face, and they know where I came from. They are very respectful, never having dared to address me but once. They put their heads together, composed a joke, and elected a spokesman; at least so I judge from the airs with which one of them got it off and the rest stood around listening :

" 'Miss does n't find warm water flavored with oatmeal nourishing for a regular diet,' said he.

"I wish you'd seen the look I gave him. He has n't opened his mouth to me since. But I thank him for the description of our dinners that he has put in words for me. There you have it, Johnny : warm water flavored with oatmeal for breakfast, dinner, and tea. I think when oatmeal is the principal diet, they might at least have it well cooked—and be a little more exclusive in regard to flies. Truth compels me to state that for dinner we have side-dishes of meat and potatoes. But I do n't indulge. There's a look that bids me beware.

"Of course my regular dinners take money, and I have to save every penny for myself. I've learned how to set my teeth and refuse when peo-

ple come begging of me for their 'objects.' I throw out hints about a starving pauper that I have on my hands, but I don't mention that the first letters of her name are J. S.

"Now for the soup story. The other day, Johnny, I smelt a smell, savory and feeding. The nearest house is across the street, and the street is wide. I thought, 'What strong soup that is to send its bouquet of sweet odors'—onions, carrots, and boiled bones—'all the way over here to tantalize us.' And then I realized that soup couldn't travel so far in that way. And then the idea broke in upon me that the smell came from our kitchen. And by-and-by—it happened to be near dinner-time—I grew equal to putting the smell and our dinner together as cause and effect.

"I felt very grateful to the doctor—generous provider of onions, carrots, and bones!—and might have rushed recklessly down to the office if my gratitude had n't taken another form of expression. An impulse seized me to do something for those 'objects' that I had slighted. I felt that they were good objects, and that one of them—a box for a home missionary—deserved the money that that soup would save my laying out for a dinner.

"I snatched fifty cents, and ran down stairs to the last room on the lower hall; and I noticed all the way that the farther I got from our room and the nearer the kitchen, the less soup I smelt, and when I went back, that the nearer I got to our room and the farther from the kitchen, the more soup I smelt.

"I puzzled over it a little, and then I saw what a goose I had been. Some philanthropist from outside had sent in a bowl of soup to one of the patients; and there I was fifty cents out for my silliness, and where was my dinner coming from? If I'd dared, I'd have gone and asked my money back.

"I thought, if it was a friend, perhaps she'd go shares if I happened to drop in; so I went softly along the hall, taking a sniff at every keyhole, till I came to the right one: and whose should it be but our next-door neighbor's!

"I was very much surprised, for I knew she was past soup-eating. They can hardly get her to swallow a mouthful of anything. Johnny, she is nearer death than I ever saw any one before. Her strength is all gone; and she's so thin and pale, with such big, hopeless eyes that it makes my heart ache.

She has three dear little children at home, and she longs to go back to them ; but the doctor will hang on to her as long as there's a breath in her body. He says it would kill her to go home, and that he can cure her *in time*. She has a soft kind of a husband, and the doctor gets around him, and between them they keep her here. She says she knows it would do her good to get home to her babies ; that she'll surely die here, and if she's got to die at all, she wants to be with them when the time comes. Poor little woman ! Does n't your heart ache for her too ?

"Well, before I thought what I was doing I knocked at the door, and got in.

"Johnny, I told you she could n't be eating soup ; but she was, not with her mouth, dear—with her feet ! She was taking a soup foot-bath. She sat propped up in a chair with her feet in a big tin pail of it. That's one way of eating !

"I had to laugh. I just sat down in a chair and roared. She laughed too, and it did her good. But, Johnny, please suggest to Goody that we drop the first course from our dinners.

"In the afternoon I went out—my purse light from its late loss—and looked about for something

cheap and filling that would keep my teeth off from the fat babies on the street.

“As I passed a grocery I smelt a smell that was sweeter than soup with onions in it: I smelt the pure onion. There were the dearest little bunches of young onions you ever saw; and I invested, and got some crackers and cardamon seeds, and went home.

“The spree had only one drawback, Johnny, and that was your absence. The onions—adjectives fail me! You know there is nothing goes to your heart like a little, tender, white, baby onion.

“I took pains to have the windows open, and plenty of draughts of fresh air stirring around, so that the room and my clothes would n’t tell tales; and when I thought I had eaten cardamon seeds enough to disguise my breath, I went to mother’s room to comb her hair.

“But she smelt my breath in a minute, and asked me so many questions, that out came the whole story. She did not say anything at all; but I saw she was taking it to heart.

“I don’t believe I have told you about combing her hair. I have done it every day for nearly a week. The first time I was so nervous and afraid

of hurting her that I pulled ; but the next day she told me I might try it again ; and when I got through she made some comparisons between Angeline's fingers and mine that were very flattering. So now I comb her hair, and I have a real good chance to compliment her while I 'm doing it—it's such pretty hair, Johnny. And from the hair I can go naturally to eyes, complexion, etc. You ought to see how she softens toward me when I say those things. I think she loves me a little tiny bit. Day before yesterday, after I had her hair all arranged, I went and begged a scarlet geranium from a lady who has ever so many ; and I came back and said,

“ ‘ I 've got a flower just like the one Margie put in your hair that day at home, mamma. I 'm going to see if I can fix it the way she did. Do n't you remember she said you ought to have some one to put flowers in your hair all the time ? I mean to do it after this. ’

“ I wish you could have seen the way her big eyes looked at me. I could n't quite understand them. She opened her lips as if she had something to say ; but she did n't say it.

“ What did Margie mean in her last letter by these words : ‘ How handsome John's friend is. He

has n't honored me with a call ; but I've seen him on the street' ? Johnny, it can't be the Dream-boy ? You can't have been deceiving me ! Please explain. By-by, dear,

“JENNY.”

Very soon after the receipt of this letter, greatly to John's surprise another came :

“DEAR JOHNNY : This is a ‘special.’ I have only waited to get alone, at eleven P. M., to pour it out. Every word of it is ringing in my head, and I want to tell it while I can tell it right. When I was combing mamma's hair this afternoon, she said,

“‘Jenny, I have insisted upon your staying here these three weeks to gratify a whim of the doctor's ; but I shall not allow him to think that I have no mind and will of my own. I shall tell him, if necessary, that he sees so much sickness all the time that his eyes get filled with it, till he sees it where there is n't any. It is perfectly evident that you are not sick, and I am not a mother to permit my child to be starved. I was quite shocked by what you told me of your sufferings yesterday. There is no reason why you should stay here any longer. You can go home if you wish.’

“Johnny, it was almost like being with you, I felt so near you for a minute. My heart went pit-a-pat. My hands wanted to clap and my feet wanted to dance, and I could hardly keep from hurrahing. But I determined not to let mamma know how glad I was to go, and I said as quietly as I could, though I suppose my voice must have sounded a little agitated,

“‘There’s an afternoon train, mamma. Shall I go right away and telegraph to John to meet me to-night?’

“‘You are in a great hurry,’ she said.

“Her tones made me feel guilty.

“‘I—I’ve never been away from John so long in my life before,’ I said.

“‘But you’ve been away from your mother most of your life,’ said she.

“And then—I don’t know why—I felt more guilty still. I felt as if it was I who had gone away and left her all those years.

“‘But then, of course,’ she said, ‘I understand that there’s a difference between John and me. I don’t expect to be what he is to you.’

“I felt myself getting redder and redder, and I could n’t have looked in her eyes, I was so ashamed.

I was glad I stood behind her; and I put up her hair as slowly as I could.

“‘Mamma, I’ll stay,’ I said. ‘I never thought of your wanting me to.’

“‘I don’t want you to stay,” she burst out. ‘It wouldn’t give me any pleasure to have you here simply as an attendant, against your choice. I don’t want you to stay because you think it is your duty. If I regret that your heart doesn’t keep you, it’s only a mother’s natural feeling, I suppose.’

“‘I want to stay,’ I managed to say.

“‘Yes, very likely,’ said she, ‘now that you fancy I want it. You have so far conquered your selfishness in the last few weeks that you would be willing to give up to me. But that is not it, Jenny. Can’t you see that it is not the loss of your services I am regretting? although I won’t deny that the services have been much pleasanter than those I have had to bear for many years. You cannot imagine what a luxury it has been to me to be attended by a lady, and that my own daughter, who has neglected me so long. The services have been very acceptable, but I can do without them. What grieves me is that you have not the natural in-

instincts of affection toward me which other girls have toward their mothers.'

"‘I have!’ I stammered out. ‘I am fond of you.’

"I had finished her hair, and been obliged to sit down where we could see each other's faces. You know how dignified and controlled her face always looks; but it did n't then, and her voice was queer.

"‘A very little, perhaps, after a month's endeavor,’ she said. ‘It is the reward of your efforts to improve that you should care something about me. The natural result of your being kinder to me is that you should be able to love me a little.

"‘But, O Jenny, think of your having to try to love your own mother! You did n't have to try when you were a baby. You used to like to have me hold you; and sometimes you used to cry for me. I've wished more than once this last week that you were that little baby, and I could *make* you love me. I ought to have kept you with me, and you would have grown up to it. I wish I had never gone away. It kills me to see you trying so hard. It would n't seem so dreadful if you had n't naturally a warm, impulsive heart. You *can* love without trying. You do n't have to try to love John. He

has come between you and me always ; and you've come between him and me too. You have had each other all these years, and I have had no one. Think of it ! But you can't. John would have to be taken away from you, where you never could reach him, for you to understand me. O Jenny, can you possibly imagine what it is to be *alone* ? It is an awful word. Can you think what it means ?

"Johnny, I wish you could have seen her face. There was n't a tear ; but there was a look I never shall forget : I can't describe it. I have seen little shadows of it before, but never understood what they meant.

"I did n't think of her selfishness then. It seemed to me I could never think of it again. I only thought of my own. I saw her life, in a flash, from the time father left it ; and it was like some one shut alone in a dark room where there was n't even a window to look out and see the sky. Can't you imagine her suffering, shut up all this time with herself and her trouble, never finding any comfort because she was always groping around that little dark room for it, instead of breaking the door down and going out where it was ! I did n't think about her having shut herself up ; I only

thought of her being there. I did n't think of her faults, I only thought of her suffering. And, Johnny, God came straight to me in that room, as much as he came to Adam and Eve in the garden ; and he said : ' I am her judge. You are her daughter ; and I made you to love her.' I do n't believe I'll ever think of her faults as much as of her suffering again.

"It was dreadful to see mamma break down. I suppose it is a sight that very few people have ever seen. I hope you'll never see such a well-controlled person losing self-control, if you do n't want your heart broken. I felt as if I ought to say something ; but my throat was all choked up so that it seemed as if I never could speak.

" ' Jenny, are you afraid of night ? ' she said. ' But you do n't know what that word means either. You do n't know what a night can be ! It means nothing but sleep to you, I suppose. It means to me the possibility of living my trouble over as many times as the night is long. Sometimes I have walked the floor ; sometimes I have just lain still, going over and over and over everything, from the beginning to the end, and right back again to the beginning. I do n't know what has kept me from being insane.

That feeling that there was nothing but me and my trouble in the world—nothing but me and my trouble anywhere—that utter impossibility of knowing anything besides—was enough to make one mad.

“‘How often I have felt as if the trouble would all be cured if some one could only get near me. But no one loves *me*. It is only my face that even Margie fancies. If some one could love *me*, and get near my heart, it would cure that awful lonesomeness.

“‘I have fought hard for my self-control. I have n’t had many of those nights for a long time until this last week. But you have stirred everything up, Jenny. I could have screamed out sometimes this week with the aching of that lonesomeness; and I could have begged you to love me—when it nearly broke my heart to see you trying. There!’

“The last word came out with such a gasp that I knew it was the end, and that she threw herself on my mercy.

“But I could n’t speak, though there was so much to say. I suppose it was beyond words—for she was my mother, Johnny, and I her daughter, for the very first time since I was a baby.

“My eyes were so full I could hardly see her, and my voice was choked with sobs ; but I got my arms around her neck and gave her a good hug ; and then we cried like two little babies. I could feel that her crying was a great deal harder and more pitiful than mine. I was broken-hearted over her troubles ; but, Johnny, I was broken-hearted, too, over the thought that I had my mother at last !

“‘Jenny, Jenny,’ she said, ‘you are my own daughter, you know. Are you ever going to leave me alone again ? Are you ever going to be so cruel as to let that horrible lonesomeness come back ? Will you stay with me every day ? Will you sleep right by me nights when I am afraid ? Will you go wherever I go ? and wait on me ? and keep close to me ? and always be kind and nice to me, the way you have since you came here ?’

“I promised her everything she asked. I promised over and over. The more she asked the more I promised. So, Johnny, you didn’t get a telegram telling you to meet me this evening. It will be ‘meet us’ when I send it.

“You see my work is laid out for me a long way ahead ; and I know well enough what I have to

do : I've got to take mother's mind and teach and train it away from herself, just as you'd train a baby ; because that's the only way to make her happy. I'm afraid I can't get near enough her heart to cure her lonesomeness until I do that ; and Johnny, I'm sure there's a place, a very near place, where I can never get, and where God will have to go and stay before she can be quite cured.

“ My first step will be to get her to pack her trunks and say good-by for ever to water-cures. There's nothing the matter with her except her ‘ high-strung, peculiarly sensitive, nervous organization.’ The doctor admits that. Of course he insists that it's just the organization over which a good doctor ought to keep watch. But I'll convince mamma that she does n't want watching ; and that she's got to stop thinking about her body before her body'll begin to behave itself. It's just like a child that you keep your eye on every minute : the more you watch it, expecting it to do something out of the way, the more it will oblige you. As I've told you before, half the trouble here is made by too much polite attention to bodies.

“ Mamma only likes the doctor because he fawns around her. She knows how absurd he is, as

well as I do. I must get her to own it ; and then we 'll go marching home !

“Then, Johnny, no more letters ! Then the good old times !

“Dear little papa Johnny ! How I do want to see him !

“HIS LOVING LITTLE MOTHER.”

CHAPTER XIV.

"CAN I assist you?" said Bob.

He had been in town two weeks, and this was the first decidedly pretty girl he had seen. It was a remarkable stroke of good luck that the wheel of the baby-wagon she was pushing should happen to come off just as he met her.

"Thank you," answered the pretty girl, snatching the baby, who set up a wail and proceeded to strangle her.

"I can tie it on, I think," said Bob, stooping to examine the wheel, "so that it wont have to be carried home. But it wont be safe for the baby; and I'll carry it if you'll let me."

"Thank you very much, but he's afraid of strangers," said the pretty girl.

"There," said Bob, having made use of some string which he found in his pocket, "that will go, I think. I'm sorry the baby's timid, but you will at least allow me to take the wagon home."

"Yes, thank you. I'm afraid I could n't manage both."

The pretty girl looked up in Bob's face and smiled.

"I shall have to introduce myself, I think," she said. "I know who you are very well. You are Mr. Hall, John Stephens' dearest friend ; and I am his sister's dearest friend."

"Then I have the honor of meeting Miss Barnard at last," said Bob, lifting his hat and coloring at the same moment that Margie colored, both being slightly embarrassed, though certainly not displeased, by the consciousness of a mutual adventure.

"It is rather strange that I should be fortunate enough to meet you in this way, Miss Barnard, after having made unsuccessful attempts ever since I came to town."

"Have you tried ?" said Margie. "I have wondered why John did n't bring you over."

"I have tried by asking him repeatedly to get your permission to bring me, and then to set an evening."

"And did John refuse?"

"He scorned to take any notice of me. He didn't even honor me a with refusal. I could n't get him to speak."

"It is evident that he doesn't consider me a desirable acquaintance for you," said Margie. "People have to be careful how they introduce their stranger friends. You must keep it a secret from him that you have met me."

"It would serve him right for his selfishness," said Bob. "It's a clear case of selfishness. I find he's ready enough to call on you alone."

"No, indeed!" said Margie. "He comes from the strictest sense of duty."

Bob laughed incredulously. Then with tones and glances in whose efficacy he had perfect faith because they had served him so well with pretty girls often before, he said:

"I wish all duty was as delightful as that must be."

The tones, the glances, and the words affected Margie very disagreeably. They recalled a sense of shame she had once felt. They brought back to her mind the most mortifying experience of her life. She did not like to remember a certain little flirtation of hers; and any advances toward flirtation reminded her of it. Since Margie began to devote her leisure to exercise, instead of novels, and since Willy Simms, whom she often saw, be-

came to her a parody on all the romances she had read, as well as a monument of her foolishness, she had had no temptation to flirt with anybody. She had put forth some very resolute purposes of will since Jenny opened her eyes ; and she was contented now to be an object of admiration to her own family and particular friends.

This was certainly quite a story-book adventure—an accident, the sudden appearance upon the scene of her dearest friend's brother's dearest friend—whom she already knew by report, whom she had wanted to meet, who had wanted to meet her, and whom circumstances had hitherto conspired to keep apart. Yes—an unmistakable adventure.

And it was just the afternoon for an adventure, the loveliest June afternoon one could imagine ; and they had met on a beautiful street, under the shade of drooping branches.

He was handsome ; and she—not bad-looking, people said. His manners were very agreeable ; and hers—no one had ever called them repulsive.

It was evident that he thoroughly appreciated the occasion, and was disposed to improve its advantages. He was quite competent and willing

to play the part of hero in this little idyl which fate and the weather had conspired to get up.

If it had only been six weeks ago the heroine elect would obediently have taken her part and a nice little flirtation would have ensued. But the heroine was indisposed to-day.

That thought came into Margie's head. If it had been six weeks ago! If Willy had been Bob! She had always deeply regretted the insignificance of her hero. It was the chief shame of her recollections. But now the thought came to her quickly that perhaps it was a good thing. If Willy had been Bob she might have been tempted to continue their flirtation. She was not in the least tempted to begin one to-day. She was only a little disgusted, a little amused, and a little sorry for Bob.

"It is n't delightful to John at all," she said, in her most sensible tones—not with an air of pretty protestation, nor with an air that challenged contradiction. "It is a great bore to him. He comes because he promised, and because I promised to let him."

"How well she does it," thought Bob. "She's an old hand. I could almost believe she meant it myself. It takes these pretty girls to lead you on."

"That's such a bold challenge, Miss Barnard," he said, with a manner whose gallantry atoned for what the words lacked, "that I'll have to meet it with a bold contradiction. Your statement, if you will pardon me, is an impossibility."

"Don't be absurd," said Margie, very sweetly. "Nor take me for a goose," she added very shortly.

Such a natural, thoroughly boyish and sensible expression came over Bob's face that it did Margie's heart good.

She was not angry with him. It was hard for any one to be angry with Bob. And she felt as if she had known him always. Everybody felt so the first time they met him. She was considering the pity that a boy with so much honesty and sense in his eye, and so much manliness in his appearance, should be spoiled by flattery, as she judged from their brief acquaintance that he had been. She remembered her own danger of being spoiled in the same way, and wished that some one could help him as Jenny had helped her.

"Ask John," said she. "Promise first to tell me just what he says, and then ask him if it isn't a bore to him to come here regularly twice a week and give me lessons. Will you do it?"

"I think I'm safe in promising," he said.

"When you get his answer and repeat it to me, you'll be convinced perhaps that I'm not fishing for compliments."

"Indeed, Miss Barnard—"

"Oh, don't deny it," said Margie. "That won't make matters any better. There are some girls in the world that are not geese, Mr. Hall."

"I believe you," said Bob. "Shake hands on it, will you?"

"With all my heart," said Margie, removing one from the clasp of the baby's fingers and giving it to him.

"There!" said Bob, "I feel better. You must think I'm a fool; but I don't look for sense in a pr—I didn't mean to make a compliment then, honestly. But, you know, you can see how a homely girl and common sense can go together. But—perhaps I'd better stop before I get in any deeper."

"I would," said Margie. "And now, Mr. Hall, this is the house I live in; and if you'll open the gate we'll go in, and you shall be introduced to my mamma, for she's heard all about you, and wants to know you. Will you come in the parlor or sit on the piazza?"

"I choose the piazza," said Bob. "It's too pleasant to go in the house to-day."

So Margie left him there, and carried the baby up stairs and brought her mother down.

And Mrs. Barnard felt as if she had known him for ever, and took a fancy to him at first sight ; and she and Bob so excluded Margie from the conversation, on account of the mutual fancy they had taken, that Margie stole away to see what Rosie was crying about.

She followed the faint and distant wail to its source, and found the child at the very end of the back yard, under a lilac-bush.

"You ridiculous baby, what are you doing there?" she said. "Come out and give me a hug."

"Me wont neiver," was the reply. "Me a toad, me are so. Me hate evwybody, me do. Me doin' to be toad and live unner here for wever."

"You'd better stop crying about it then," said Margie ; "because toads can't cry a tear, and somebody'll think you're Rosie Barnard if you cry."

"Me are Wosy Barnard too," screamed the child. "Me are mine own Wosy Barnard. Now!"

"Oh, if I thought you were Rosie," said Margie,

"I'd take you up to the house to see the nicest gentleman, with a lovely watch in his pocket."

"Have it dot 'ittle wheels what do wound and wound and wound?" asked Rosie, making circles with her cunning forefinger as she ran out to Margie. "Me want to see him."

So Margie lifted her in her arms, and laid the little rumpled head and wet cheek in her neck, and comforted away a lingering sob or two with gentle touches.

"Who was it that made you hate everybody, baby? Now tell me very pleasantly," she said.

"Dat Pat Barnard," said Rosie, trying desperately not to get furious at the mention of her name. "Her a fief, her are. Her stole mine own ginger—bread!"

"There! there! Don't cry!" said Margie. "I'll make it all right with Patty. And try and be a pleasant baby till Patty comes and asks you to forgive her. Will you say Yes to her right away, Rosie? Give Margie a kiss straight on her mouth, and promise to be very pleasant and say Yes the minute Patty asks you to forgive her; will you?"

Rosie put up her lips for an answer; but Margie knew her tricks too well to be satisfied with

anything less than "I p'omise," which she finally succeeded in getting.

"Now we'll have the face washed and a clean apron on, and go and see the gentleman," said Margie.

So when she had made her fresh and sweet, she carried her out and introduced her to Bob; and Rosie too felt as if they were old acquaintances, and took a great fancy to him.

Leaving him with Rosie on his knee, highly entertained by her lively little tongue, Margie slipped away again presently, to go after Patty, the "fief."

She soon found her in a neighbor's arbor, where she and a comrade were playing "keep house."

"Come here, Patty," she said. "I want to speak to you."

Patty obeyed with charming alacrity, and a face full of smiling impudence, not at all disturbed by the fact that the tale of her guilt was written around her mouth in gingerbread crumbs.

There was a gay unconcern about her manner when brought to judgment that Margie always dreaded to encounter. It was hard to mete justice soberly to her, and look upon her misdemeanors as anything but cunning little accomplishments.

"Patty, how could you take your poor little sister's gingerbread away from her?" said Margie, leading her towards home.

"Oh, just as easy," she answered brightly.

"It was *stealing*!" said Margie, in the most awful tones she could command.

"Stealing's when you lie about it, you know," said Patty, as if Margie were but beginning to learn the definitions of things, and needed much patient instruction. "Stealing's when they don't know you did it and they can't catch you. I snatched her old gingerbread 'fore all the world. The minister could a seen me if he'd wanted to look."

"You are talking in a very naughty and silly way," said Margie. "Stealing is taking what does not belong to you. Do you think it's kind to take food out of your poor little sister's mouth?"

"Yes; she eats too much," said Patty. "I heard you say so lots o' times. She's an awful pig. I would n't be fat like her for anything."

"Run away, Patty," said Margie. "I do n't care to talk to a little girl who's been a coward, and then is too much of a coward to own it. A brave girl would be ashamed to take things away from a little baby like Rosie, who couldn't help herself. I'd

choose some one of my size if I wanted to do such a greedy thing."

Patty went off with a sprightly gait, singing as she hopped, apparently in the most excellent spirits. But Margie knew she had not called her a coward in vain, and that in her own time and way Patty would redeem her reputation.

Margie returned to the piazza once more.

"Excuse me for running off," she said, "though I don't believe you either of you know I've been away. C-h-i-l-d-r-e-n will get into t-r-o-u-b-l-e sometimes. I have had a small u-n-p-l-e-a-s-a-n-t-n-e-s-s to settle."

"D-o-g, cat!" shouted Rosie, wishing to let Bob know that Margie was not the only learned member of the family.

Bob jumped.

"You don't tell me!" he said. "Well, now let's have Jehoshaphat, and I'll show you how the wheels go round again."

Margie flew to her rescue.

"You can do something better than spell that ugly old word," she said. "You can tell him a pretty story, Rosie."

"'Bout Dolden-Hair?" asked Rosie.

"Oh, I'd love to hear about Golden-Hair," said Bob.

"Fordot!" said Rosie woefully, after a moment's pondering.

"Once upon—" prompted Margie.

"Unce uppony time," began Rosie triumphantly; after which she made successful progress.

She was in the most delightful mood for showing off, and she gave him stories and songs as fast as he demanded them. After each one his shouts of applause rang out so loudly and boyishly, that Margie laughed to herself when she thought of his little speeches on the way home.

"Now give Mr. Hall 'I had a little husband,'" said Margie.

"I had a yittle husbum
No bigger zan mine fum,"

Rosie began, when a sharp whoop, that seemed to be a signal, broke upon their ears.

"It's Patty," said Margie.

"Another sister?" said Bob.

"Still another. We're literally seven, Mr. Hall—four girls and three boys. Now, Rosie, remember the promise, and go and see what Patty wants. There she is behind the elm-tree."

Rosie came back presently with her teeth in a big, red apple.

"May Patty see do wheels do wound?" she asked. "Her dood dirl now. Her dim me apple."

"I wonder where she got it," said Margie.

"Come here, Patty," called Bob.

"Come here yourself," she answered, poking a wicked little head around the tree at him.

"She's our black sheep," said Margie. "Please do n't judge of the other children's manners by hers."

But Bob had immediately accepted her invitation, and darted toward her tree. She dodged him for a moment, and then ran out into the yard. He had a hard time holding her after he caught her; but he bore her to the piazza in triumph on his shoulder at last.

She was not as easily won as the other members of the family had been. She required persuasion to establish a friendship with Bob. But after she did come to terms Bob began to wonder what new variety of character the next little Barnard he should meet would present, and to be curious to see all those little Barnards yet unknown.

But he found that he had made a first call an hour long, and rose reluctantly to go.

"Do n't go," said Mrs. Barnard. "Stay to tea, and get acquainted with the rest of us."

"Thank you," said Bob, sitting down at once. "How kind you are to an adventurous stranger. I wonder what John would say if he knew I was here spending the afternoon, and going to stay to tea."

"It is quite a joke on John," said Mrs. Barnard. "We will have to tease him about it."

"Let's meet as strangers when he introduces us, Miss Margie," said Bob. "I'd like to get off something to pay him for a very bad joke he got on me a day or two after I came."

"Well," said Margie, "we'll be strangers, and perhaps we'll think of some brilliant revenge."

By tea-time Bob had discussed with Dick Barnard the best method of rearing young squirrels separated from their parents by force, and had called with him upon a small squirrel in such an orphaned condition, who resided in a cage in the back yard. He had also committed to his keeping his four-bladed knife, with the understanding that it should remain till called for. He had discussed the respective oratorical merits of Demosthenes and Cicero with Frank. He had held a solemn conference with Bessie on the name to be given to her

new doll. He had, after long patience and perseverance, won over the baby, the most obstinate member of the family, to his charms. At the tea-table he talked politics with the father. And altogether Bob felt that he had had a thoroughly delightful afternoon ; that it was one of the pleasantest adventures which had ever fallen to his lot, though adventures fell to his lot frequently ; and his intellect had succeeded in accepting the paradox of a pretty girl combined with common sense.

One after another the children went to bed. Mr. Barnard strolled off the piazza into the yard to smoke the bugs from a precious white rose with tobacco, and Mrs. Barnard followed to see them die.

Bob and Margie were sitting on the steps. A stillness suddenly fell upon him. Margie made one or two trifling remarks, which he did not notice.

"I was thinking how much good you'd done me to-day, Miss Margie," said he. "If there were more sensible young ladies there'd be more sensible young men."

"If there were more sensible young men there'd be more sensible young ladies," said Margie.

"Now I've had the best time here to-day," said

Bob, laughing; "and how jolly and straightforward it's all been. Generally, when there's a young lady around, there's more or less simpering and made-up talk going on between us. I must own I see the fun in it, but it is n't half the fun this afternoon's been."

"Do you always lay the blame on the girls?" said Margie.

"I—I do n't know but I'm rather inclined to," said Bob. "Woman's influence, you know—"

"Yes, I know that speech," said Margie. "I'm going to compose one on man's influence when I get the brains. What would all the men since Adam have done without that little speech to crawl behind when they get into trouble?"

"‘You can make me what you will;
I am in your hands as dough—’

I could compose a poem on it, the theme's so inspiring," said Bob. "But to tell you the truth, Miss Margie, since I'm in a truthful mood, I do suppose my own hankering after flattery's at the very bottom of it. I never really thought so till Jack put it to me pretty plainly the other day."

"Is John trying to reform you?" said Margie, laughing heartily. "I'm Jenny's trophy. She

brought me up from the depths. And if I've done you any good to-day, you mustn't give me the credit, Mr. Bob. It all belongs to Jenny. She reformed me."

"You!" said Bob. Were you ever—"

"Yes, very," answered Margie. "I was as fond of admiring glances as you are, not more than six weeks ago, too; and I read so many stories that I thought it was quite out of the way not to have a constant admirer, young and masculine. So I took the only one who had ever acted as if he thought I was fascinating. Oh, I wouldn't have any one know who he was for the world; but you'd kill yourself laughing if you could see him. He's the most absurd little creature. It makes me perfectly ashamed to think of it. I don't know how I could have told you. But I suppose I must have wanted to make a warning of myself, and try and do somebody good the way Jenny did me when I needed it. You see I thought it was quite entertaining till Jenny gave me a shaking and made me see what a goose I was."

"Well, that's a confession!" said Bob, very gleefully. "I'm much obliged, Miss Margie, and I'll try and profit by it. But I'm beginning to

think John's sister is a kind of a young Amazon."

"Wait till you see her," said Margie. "She's perfectly splendid."

"She—is n't—at all—inclined—to be masculine—is she?" asked Bob, in fear and trembling lest the answer should be Yes.

"Wait till you see her," said Margie. "She's *perfectly splendid!*"

"Waiting seems to be my programme in regard to her," said Bob. "But to go back to our subject, Miss Margie. How silly it is, when you think of it, to deliberately go to work to put on your tones and your looks, and to talk made-up speeches. How much trouble it would save if boys and girls could always talk to each other straight ahead, the way girls do to girls and boys to boys."

"Would n't it!" said Margie. "And the worst of it is that the people you can make an impression on that way are never worth the pains."

"That's true," said Bob. "Your sisters and cousins, and those that serve you best for friends, you'd never think of trying that nonsense with. How they'd laugh at you! Well, I'm going to reform for a while and see how I like it. I'm going

to consider the source after this when I get a compliment for my eyes or my smile. I'll try being sensible, and then if I get tired of it, it's easy enough to go down the inclined plane again. And now let me thank you once more, Miss Margie, before I say good-night."

"No, thank Jenny," said Margie.

"Accept my thanks, Mysterious Unknown," said Bob.

"What good times we'll all have when she gets home," said Margie. "I'm glad you're going to stay all summer, Mr. Bob."

"Thank you," said Bob. "Jack promises me a very pleasant summer."

"The lake makes our summers pleasant," said Margie. "We live on the water. Jenny rows splendidly; and John is one of the best sailors in town. Mamma will let any of the children go with him. Oh, we'll have good times, Mr. Bob, now that we've decided not to play at being grown-up."

"That's it," said Bob. "We're not much more than out of our jackets and short dresses; and why should n't we have the rights and privileges of children a few years yet?"

He said Good-night soon after, with the parting injunction,

"Do n't forget that we're strangers when we're introduced."

Margie went up to her room, and on the way she heard a thump as of some one jumping out of bed, then the pattering of feet; then she saw a white vision in the moonlight, on the threshold of Patty's door.

"What's the matter, Patty? Are you sick?" she said.

"I'm 'most dead holding my eyes open for you till that boy went home," said Patty. "I was n't going to sleep 'thout telling you. Catch me."

"Telling me what, dear?"

"Did you see that apple, Miss Margie?"

"The one you gave Rosie? Yes. I wondered where you got it. I was going to ask you."

"Better ask that Bailey boy," said Patty, kicking up her little bare feet as she laughed wildly. "Call me a coward, do you? Guess he do n't think I'm much coward. Guess he's higher'n me—six feet! Guess I can take 'em of my size as well as you. Guess I'm not such a *dretful* coward!"

All the while Margie could see her little head bobbing proudly, and hear contemptuous sniffs between her words.

"Margie," said she more quietly, running out and throwing her arms around her, all ready now to receive the praise she had earned, "I thought and I thought and I thought what you said, and I watched and I watched and I watched, and bimeby the Bailey boy came along with a apple; and I ran and I snatched it, and I ran and I gave it to Rosie; and that was worth more 'n all the old gingerbread I ever stole, was n't it, Margie?"

The three last words were such a sweet and innocent appeal, that Margie's heart smote her when she exclaimed,

"Why, Patty, did you steal Harry Bailey's apple?"

"No, I did n't," screamed Patty. "I just grabbed it. And you said to take some one of my size, and he was lots more 'n my size. Oh, you wicked girl, to say I stoled! Oh, how I scared him! He never dared only to stand still and laugh."

"But, Patty," said Margie, "you did n't understand me, darling. I did n't mean to tell you that you should take things away from anybody. Put

your arms around my neck, and I'll lift you into bed before your feet get cold."

She talked to her seriously a few minutes, and thought on her peculiar case very seriously after she bade her good-night. She was the most perplexing member of her little flock. It seemed sometimes as if Patty's moral sense had been left out.

CHAPTER XV.

"It's the queerest thing I do n't hear from Jenny," said John to Bob. "She's always been prompt before. It's three days after the time for her regular letter. If I do n't hear to-morrow I think I'll go on the next day. She might be sick, you know."

"She wont want you around then, if she's anything like my sisters," said Bob. "The best thing you can do is to compose your mind and keep your boots as far away from her as possible. There's nothing makes my sisters so nervous as boots when they're out of sorts."

"My sister is n't nervous," said John.

"Oh, of course not," said Bob. "Nervousness would n't come under the head of perfectly splendid, I suppose. She can row for business, can't she, Jack?"

"How do you know?"

"I'll bet she can climb a tree, too," said Bob.

"Well, whose business is it if she can?"

"You need n't get so savage about it," said Bob.

"I know she can swing as heavy a pair of kehoes as I can."

John stared at him. He certainly had never told him the weight of her clubs; and he could n't have seen them, for they had been left at Margie's.

"Wonder where I got all my information, do n't you?" said Bob. "I know more than that."

"I hope you enjoy pumping servants."

"You're in a sweet temper to-night," said Bob. "It's time a letter or your sister came around; or somebody gave you a lump of sugar. You've been grumpy for three days."

"Ever since that last letter was due," said John. "I really am worried. Jenny's always on time. And of course the longer she stays away the more I miss her. It seems so queer not to have her around. The worst of it is I do n't see much chance of her coming back, for she's written me that she's promised not to leave mother again; and it's hard to move mother from that water-cure."

"You've taken a delicate way of preparing my mind for the fact that your sister's made arrangements to stay away since she heard that I'd made my arrangements to be here this summer. I expect to leave town on the ninth of September next.

On the tenth Miss Stephens will return to her home and the arms of her bereaved brother. Jack, don't let me deprive you of her. I'll pack my trunk and be off to-morrow sooner than take the responsibility of keeping you in such a temper as this all summer. It can't fail to end in hydrophobia when dog-days come around."

"The least you can do is to stay and console me this evening," said John.

"Don't tempt me!" said Bob. "I'm too anxious. I hardly dare come in here on an errand for fear father'll drop down upon me. Every letter I get he warns me against your wiles. 'Remember what you're away from home for,' he says. 'Hard work, to be well done. Don't fool your time away with Jack.' Then he always winds up with a tender message to Jack."

"I appreciate your father's feelings," said John. "That's the reason I do n't urge you to stay around more. But I rage internally because you can't, all the same. How goes Anabasis?"

"It goes against me," said Bob. "Do n't talk Greek to me, if you please. I'm lying off just at present. I do n't mix Anabasis and recreation. But look here, boy—I haven't been pumping your

servants. I haven't got quite down to that. My informant was a lady."

"What ladies do you know here?"

"I have met an occasional individual since I came to town."

"Well I suppose you've found out all you want to about Jenny, then; and your curiosity's satisfied."

"Yes: I know she's 'perfectly splendid,'" said Bob. "You told me yourself that she used clubs regularly. You had to tell me something to explain away those semi-weekly visits to that pretty girl friend of hers."

"How do you know she's pretty?"

"No thanks to you," said Bob. "But a fellow's apt to hear of it when there's a pretty girl in town."

"You'd be sure to hear of it in some way," said John.

"Come, now, that's too thin," said Bob, "your going round there twice a week to oblige your sister! I've never happened to notice that sisters give brothers that kind of little commissions. O Jack, I didn't think you'd resort to such a flimsy dodge. It's much too thin."

John looked as if he heard not. But presently he said :

"I suppose I wont have any peace till I take you around there. The more I put you off the more agitated you get on the subject. If it had been any other fellow I'd have taken him to call as a matter of course. But I knew you and Margie could n't meet without getting up some sort of nonsense or other between you ; and you have n't got any time for nonsense now, Bob. You do n't want to fool away any precious hours at your old tricks. Do you know what your father charged me the other day when he was down ?"

"No. What ?"

"Do n't let him see any pretty girls. Keep his head level, Jack. Keep his head level ; and I'll be your debtor !"

"Sounds genuine," said Bob. "I recognize his spirit in the words. But what an old dunderhead you are to think you could keep me away from any one I'd made up my mind to know. I'd go round there and introduce myself if I was anxious enough."

"Do n't doubt it," said John. "Why, of course, Bob, if you'd really like to get acquainted with

Margie, I'll call with you some evening; but I just have a presentiment that you'll make yourselves ridiculous over each other."

"She's inclined to make herself ridiculous, is she?"

"Rather leans that way," said John; "though she's a nice girl and will outgrow it if she does n't get in with some such chap as you first."

"What a bore it must be for you to have to give her those lessons while your sister's away, if you really don't take to her especially," said Bob, determined to come to the object of his visit—for he had been lately rebuked by Margie for not keeping his promise and inquiring of John whether or not he considered the lessons a bore.

"Yes, it is," said John; "to have to go around regularly, whether I feel like it or not. It's a bore to her too; but Jenny could n't have the lessons dropped."

"Good-night, Jack," said Bob. "I hate to leave you alone, boy. You'll get your letter in the morning, probably."

"It is only half-past eight," said John.

"I know it; but I've got a good hour's work before me this evening. I'd stay anyway if there

was n't an elderly gentleman over in Barnaby that might hear of it."

"Good-night," said John. "I really think I'll explain to Davis, and take the morning train, if I do n't get a letter by the first mail."

Bob walked out of the house. It was a clear moonlight night, and he saw a carriage coming, of which he took no more notice than of the trees and fences, until it stopped at the gate toward which he was going. He quickened his steps as a lady threw open the door; but before he could arrive to help her she had jumped out, leaving another lady behind, jerked the gate open, and came up the path like a whirlwind, with arms flying.

"Johnny!" was her wild cry.

He stood still, lifted his hat and said, "Good-evening," just in time to save her the mortification of an embrace.

"It's the Dream-boy!" said she, falling back aghast.

"It's the Unknown!" said he.

Then they laughed a welcome to each other, and Jenny dashed by him towards John, the object of her mad chase.

And while they were embracing in the library,

Bob hastened to the carriage and introduced himself to Mrs. Stephens.

"I am delighted to meet you," she said, quite genuinely; for his form and face made a very pleasant impression on her in the moonlight. "Have you just arrived?"

"Oh, no, ma'am! I have been here ever since you went away."

"John has n't written us about it," said she. "We would have been so glad to know that he had company."

"How very queer!" thought Bob.

"Give her a good hug, Johnny," whispered Jenny, as their mother's footsteps approached.

So John braced up and made his greeting as affectionate as possible; and, not to let his tongue be behindhand, he assured her, with more warmth than wisdom, that he was never so glad to welcome her home.

"Because I never brought Jenny to you before," said she.

But she was in gay spirits, and she laughed and called John an ungallant boy. Then she said with a charming nod,

"Never mind, John; we shall be introduced and

get acquainted, and then you shall like me. You know Jenny and I have gone through those forms since we have been away together; and we find that we are quite nice people. We are getting really intimate."

She gave John's cheek a little pat, which he received with a blush and awkward silence, being unaccustomed to the like.

"I fancy your friend," she said.

The friend, meanwhile, and Jenny, had, without speaking a word, by a common instinct, and in the most solemn manner, deliberately stepped under the gaslight to view each other, and Mrs. Stephens noticed the anxiety with which John awaited the result.

John himself was able to look at Jenny after her long absence as if she were some one else's sister. He regarded her more critically than ever before; and he saw a frank, winning face, which he thought it would be unpardonable in any one to object to on account of faults of feature.

Bob was not disposed to object. He saw that she was not a "pretty girl," according to the regular standard; but he was rather glad of that, as it would save him some temptations. He thought

John's warning quite superfluous, since no one would ever dream of trying softness with Jenny after one glimpse of her face. She was a girl to have nice, sensible, comfortable times with. It was a great relief to his mind to find that there was nothing "sloppy" or coarse about her, as he had been led to fear lately. He liked her—very much.

Jenny was a little disappointed. But then she reflected that it was unreasonable in her to expect all boys to have strong, grand faces like her brother's; and she was sure she should never dislike Bob's honest and amiable countenance.

"Well, Mr. Dream-boy," said she, "I've caught you at last. You didn't get off by the lightning express this time when you heard I was coming, for the reason that I didn't let you know that I was coming."

"I should rather think I'd caught you, Miss Unknown," said Bob. "I understand that you hadn't heard I was in town. You'd have stayed away all summer to avoid me, I suppose. But it won't do any good for you to run away, now that I've once seen you."

"I never ran away from you," said Jenny. "I've

never avoided you. I've been crazy to see you. It is you that ran away."

"I beg your pardon," said Bob, "but I've been kept away from your house, while you were in it, in the most pointed manner; and Jack can tell you how crazy I've been to see you."

"Then it's John himself all this time," said Jenny. "It's the artless Johnny! No one ever suspects him. You wretched boy!" said she, boxing him affectionately on both sides of his head. "I've seen your friend in spite of you. I had a presentiment that I'd gain something if I took you by surprise. What do you mean by it? Own up everything! How long has he been here?"

"Yes," said Bob, "if you do n't consider me fit to associate with your sister, say so."

"And if you do n't consider me fit to associate with your friend, say so," said Jenny, slapping his cheek so hard that he had to seize her hands.

"Let go of them at once," said Jenny. "I've got to punish you for such a wicked, deceitful piece of business, or you'll come to a bad end."

"You'd no sooner left the dépôt than he wrote to me, Miss Jenny," said Bob; "and I came right on, and have been in town ever since."

"Johnny," said Jenny, "speak up like a man. Now's your time. If you've anything to say for yourself I give you a chance. Stop pinching my thumbs, sir!"

"Well, Jenny," spoke Mrs. Stephens up from the depths of an arm-chair, "I still have my bonnet on, and Miss Goodrich has not been informed that we are here. I did not plan this surprise, nor discharge my maid."

"So you didn't, momley," said Jenny; "you let me plan it, and annihilate the Rubber when she proposed to follow us home, didn't you? Now, Johnny, you take off mamma's things for her, ducky, and make her comfortable while I go and stir up Goody.

"Dream-boy," said she, running back from the hall, "are you going to glide away while I am gone?"

"Not unless you wish it," said Bob.

"How about that hour's work you've got before you?" said John.

"It's *my* work," said Bob. "Do you hear this, Miss Jenny? It's the first time he's ever tried to turn me out of the house."

"Don't you be turned out on my account,"

said Jenny. "Stay right there till I come back and protect you."

She was obliged to go to Miss Goodrich's room to find her; and there they had a tender, and on Miss Goodrich's part, a tearful meeting.

"Your room and a cup of tea will be ready, and all your other wants will be supplied in the course of five minutes, momley," said Jenny, when she came back. "Did Johnny take good care of you? Isn't it nice to be at home again? Aren't you glad we're safely away from that horrid water-cure? This library's a dear, cosey old room. Isn't it nice, mamma? I was determined to take you by surprise, Johnny. But then we decided to come so suddenly that we rather took ourselves by surprise, too."

"Compose yourself, Jenny," said her mother, for she was flying around, her tongue moving rapidly, her eyes glistening, and her face flushed with excitement.

"I'm too happy to be composed," said Jenny. "Oh, how lovely home is! And what an old pigeon that deceitful boy is!" pouncing upon John's head, which she squeezed in her arms.

Bob watched her in a dazed, bewildered way.

She was a variety of girl to which he was not accustomed. But it suddenly occurred to him that this was a family reunion, and he was not a member of the family. So he rose to say good-night.

As he took his hat, Jenny asked where he was going; and learned he was not John's guest.

"I forgot Jack had n't condescended to tell you anything about me," said Bob. "He and my father entered into a conspiracy, and the consequence is that I'm your neighbor for the summer. Mr. Davis has agreed to cram me for college by September; and I've got to enter with this boy, instead of waiting a respectable length of time."

"Then you and John will go together in the fall; and you'll be here all summer, right next door," said Jenny. "How nice! I thought, of course you'd leave by the first morning train. Wont we have fun! Can you shoot, swim, fish, sail, and climb a tree? I know you can, though, by your looks. We have perch, and trout, and black bass, and pickerel in our lake. I caught a trout that weighed seven pounds once; but our game's nothing better than squirrels and chipmunks."

John rose, came behind Jenny and laid his hands over her mouth.

"Give your throat a rest," he said. "You'll have croup before morning at this rate."

"I bid you good-evening," said Bob. "It is time for me to retire when matters get to that state where he wont let you speak to me."

"I shall find out all his secrets, to-night," said Jenny, "and I'll tell you to-morrow why he's kept us apart."

"But I may not see you to-morrow," said Bob; "nor ever again. He'll probably use violent means to prevent it."

"We're two to one," said Jenny. "I'm not afraid of him."

They walked out on the piazza with Bob, and watched him beyond the gate.

"You must be careful how you talk to him, chicken," said John, pinching her cheek affectionately. "He's very particular in his ideas about girls. Anything like slang or boyishness disgusts him."

"Oh!" said Jenny. "Oh! I see. It begins to dawn upon me. You were ashamed of me, Johnny. That's the reason you kept me out of his way."

"Ashamed!" said John, "I could never have been that. You know I've always been satisfied with you just as you were. But every man to his tastes; and I wanted you to suit Bob, too. I knew how particular he was, and it is natural enough I should want my best friend to like my only sister. So I thought I'd keep you out of sight till you got toned down, Jenny. I didn't care anything about keeping this visit of his a secret. I did it for fun at first, and my last letter was finished before I thought of it. I meant to tell you in the very next one."

"So it's the Dream-boy I've been reforming for!" said Jenny. "It is the Dream-boy I've worked so hard to be a lady for! It is the Dream-boy I've patched and darned and sewed on buttons for; and learned to tie up overskirts, and brushed my hair a dozen times a day for! O Johnny! And I've been so pleased all this time to think what I was doing for you! I'll tear rags in my dresses! I'll pull off all the tapes and buttons I can lay hands on! I won't brush my hair for a month; you see if I do!"

"That'll please mother!" said John.

'Oh, but I must pay him," said Jenny. "I'll

have to pay him! What can I do? Suggest something. He was disgusted with me to-night, was he? I'll talk all the slang I please before him!"

"Well, talk it!" said John. "Forfeit his good opinion if you want to; but don't let's have any unpleasantness between us. I'm too glad to get you home. You wont go off again in a hurry. I was down in the depths about you just before you came. Now tell me all about everything."

"Jenny," called Mrs. Stephens.

"By-and-by, Johnny."

"Are you her slave?"

"No, dear, her daughter."

CHAPTER XVI.

BUT it was not long before John came to regard the words slave and daughter as one and the same.

He and Jenny met at breakfast the morning after her return and had a cosey little interview, though there was not much time for talking, as Jenny was in a hurry to get over to Margie's before she went to school. She had not left the table, however, when Miss Goodrich came into the room, and after having closed the door with more noise than was necessary, demanded :

“What's become of that Rubber?”

“She's a fixture in the water-cure for the rest of her days, I hope,” said Jenny. “I've got rid of her, Goody. I thought of you, too, when I was doing it. She began to pack up to come home with us, in the coolest way, when she heard we were going to leave; but I informed her that mother would n't require her services any longer.”

“Who does the rubbing?” demanded Miss Goodrich once more.

"Your humble servant," said Jenny.

"I s'pose that's what you're wanted for then," said Miss Goodrich. "Your mother says to come up stairs as soon as you've done your breakfast."

"Tell mother that Jenny'll be up as soon as she gets home. She's going over to Margie's for a little while. She's in a hurry to see her before school," said John.

"No, Goody, tell her I'm coming right away," said Jenny. "I can wait till noon to see Margie. You go over and tell her to come to lunch, John."

"Well, Miss Jenny, I didn't think you'd turn out a Rubber so soon!" said Miss Goodrich.

"Now, Goody," said Jenny, "that's mean in you. I've had you in my thoughts all the time when I've been coaxing mother away from the water-cure. I thought how proud you'd be to have me get the start of the doctor and the Rubber and bring mother home; and instead of praising you revile me!"

"Law, Miss Jenny, your mother will have her back rubbed if it aches; and I'd rather that cat of an Angeline would be 'round than that you should go to laming yourself."

"Look at that wrist," said Jenny, baring it;

“and come and feel of my muscle, Goody. What’s the use of such an arm as that if I can’t turn it to account? I begin to see the advantages of all my exercising. It has qualified me to rub.”

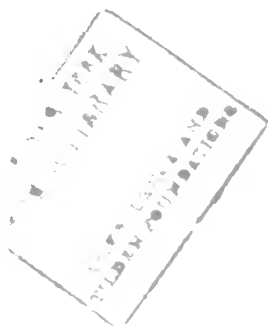
“This is a new order of things, I must say!” said Miss Goodrich.

“Is n’t it?” said Jenny. “As mamma says, we’ve been introduced, and got acquainted, and taken a fancy to each other, and are growing quite intimate. You don’t know what nice times we’ve had together, Goody; and you remember how I hated to go, do n’t you?”

“Oh, yes, I remember!” said Miss Goodrich; “and I did n’t think you were one to be come around so easily.”

“Now just stop being such a cross, unreasonable old thing,” said Jenny. “I have n’t been come around. I’ve come around everybody. I worked a whole week to make that little doctor appear so ridiculous to mother that she’d give up her faith in him; and though I can’t say she’s quite done that, she did defy him enough to come home for a visit; and I went to work myself, Miss Goody, and packed everything that belonged to us; and there’s nothing now to draw her back but the doctor’s letters—





which I think I'm equal to answering. Why, Goody, if you knew what a time I'd had with doctors, Rubbers, and all, you'd be giving me a little of the praise I expected from you."

"Well, well," said Miss Goodrich, "I didn't know how it was. You couldn't expect me to know without being told."

"I ought to have let John read parts of my letters to you," said Jenny; "but I was all the while intending to write to you myself. The next time you sit down to mending, Goody, I'll come up and converse with you about the doctor."

"Why I had a tilt with him the very last thing before I came away. I was standing in the hall all ready for the *dépôt*, when I felt something jerking at my braid; and there was the Smile behind me. He moves around in such a soft, slippery way, that you never know he's anywhere till you put your eyes on him. I was so mad that before I thought I screeched,

" 'Stop pulling my hair.' "

"Then he got off something about its being such a heavy, beautiful braid; and too much weight on the base of my brain."

"It was on the tip of my tongue to tell him that

my brain had more base to stand on, and hold up weight, than some people's I knew."

"How polite that would have been," said John.

"I'll have the clothes to look over this morning; and any time you want to see me I can go up stairs, Miss Jenny," said Miss Goodrich.

"Well," said Jenny, "we'll have a good time freeing our minds by-and-by."

"And don't go to worrying about Jenny's hurting herself with rubbing," said John. "I'll trust her for stopping when she's tired."

"It would n't be much like her to tie herself down to anything she hated," said Miss Goodrich. "But with all the changes I didn't know what might n't have happened."

Jenny kept still; but she thought that perhaps she had some surprises in store for John and Goody. She had already learned the strict requirements of those promises she gave her mother, and she held a promise sacred.

She went up to her mother's room. She had taken her breakfast in bed, and the chambermaid was busy.

"Be as quick as you can, Eliza," said Mrs. Stephens. "My head feels badly."

"Yes, ma'am," said she, dropping the duster against the hearth.

"You are early this morning, mother," said Jenny, sitting down on the edge of the bed.

She saw at once that something was wrong with her mother; and yet she had been in such good spirits the evening before.

"Yes," said Mrs. Stephens, "I have had a wretched night. There, that will do, Eliza," as the duster fell again. "Miss Jenny will finish, I think.

"How long it takes one to learn," she said, when the door had closed after Eliza, "that it is never safe to act on an impulse. If I had not left the doctor I suppose he could give me something for my head."

"Does it ache, mamma?"

"Not as other people's heads ache. It is that dreadful sensation that you can't put in words. The doctor understands it."

"Let me bathe it with cologne."

"No, I do n't want it bathed."

"Would n't it feel better if I brushed your hair?"

"No; you can't do anything for it, unless you can keep it from thinking?"

"I'll read to you," said Jenny, "and get it thinking about something new."

"I'm tired to death of books," said her mother.

"If you only felt like getting up," said Jenny, "we might take a little walk. It's such a lovely morning."

"My dear child, you know I am not able to walk."

"Then we could drive."

"You seem to forget that people are not in the habit of driving when the air is white with dust. We can't drive until there has been rain.

"I couldn't help thinking last night, Jenny," she said, "how different everything might always have been. There need not have been any memories of you that would give me pain. I need not have had any wretched associations with this house. Why should my coming back to it always depress me? I thought last night that it would be quite different, or I should have asked you to stay with me. But I kept thinking of the contrast between your treatment of me now and hitherto; and your kindness now seemed to bring out your past neglect more vividly."

"But that's all over, mamma," said Jenny, try-

ing not to let the impatience she felt get into her voice. "Have n't we loved each other beautifully since that day you broke my heart in two telling me how lonesome you were, and I promised to be your good little daughter? What's the use of going back?"

"I should be very glad not to think," said her mother. "But I could not help remembering how many times I had come home without feeling that it was my home, knowing there was no love waiting for me, and envying the mothers whose children loved them."

"O dear!" said Jenny, in perfect despair.

"Run away and make yourself happy, my child," said her mother. "Don't let me feel that I am clouding your spirits."

"Do n't be a silly little momley," said Jenny, patting her cheeks. "I do n't want to run away, and I wont run away. I'd be ten times cloudier if I left you. I want to make you feel better, momley, and I've proposed everything under the sun, and you wont accept. I just wish there was anything I could do, and I'd do it. Want to see what a nice somerset I can turn? I learned lots of new tricks in the gymnasium."

"O Jenny," said her mother, "what a surface nature yours is!"

"It's a great deal more comfortable than a deep one," said Jenny. "You just try it, mamma."

"You have yet to learn the realities of life," said her mother. "Life is n't all play and sunshine as girls of your age fancy. How often I have been told that my nature is too earnest, and that I go too deeply into things. Mrs. Schietlin always said so."

And then followed a story, in whose telling she seemed to take comfort, and which Jenny heard patiently, although it was rather a sorrowful story, and she was tired of sorrowful stories. She had heard a great many since her mother's first confession let her into the gloomy solitudes of her heart. Almost every day since then she had been presented to new skeletons. Delicacy had always restrained her mother from going, with ordinary listeners, below the mere recital of adventures, into motives and emotional experiences. But Jenny's nearness of kinship, and her fresh, genuine, and entire sympathy, tempted her to introduce into her stories a minor undertone.

"I remember one morning in Zurich," she said,

“Count Von Gonsenbach had asked me to go rowing. I don’t care for rowing in the least; but he was very kind; and indeed, dear, I had no thought then of its being anything but the merest friendliness. A dozen affairs of that sort never prepare one for another. You know what a mother Mrs. Schietlin was to me, and that I positively made it a rule not to go anywhere without her. But that morning she was taken suddenly ill; and I went alone with the count, just because I could n’t collect my senses soon enough to make up an excuse. He had been pursuing me and boring me to death for weeks. He had a lovely castle; and a party of us had been out there to spend a day. I assure you, my dear, that I was the only woman in town who was indifferent to him. But it was as tiresome to me as a five-volume novel always to see those same languid looks, and hear those same soft tones. I used to wish that he would give some of his admiration to the women who wanted it.

“Well, Jenny, who could think of him with the Alps in sight? I believe I had been thinking as I almost always did, about the wonder of seeing the snow, and you in the midst of the summer—green trees and sunlight and the warm, blue water all

about you. And I believe when he spoke I was trying to see how many white peaks and how many bare brown ones I could count.

"I forgot that there was such a person as Count Von Gonsenbach in the world—especially in the boat with me—until I heard his soft voice saying something that he had no more right to say than if your father had been in Zurich, waiting on the shore till I should come home.

"I have always felt that way, Jenny. I am sure I cannot help it if people will gaze at me, and behave as if I were the only woman to be gazed at; but when any one speaks to me in that way I feel it as much of an impertinence as if your dear father were living. How could I care for any one after him? I have been faithful to his memory every hour.

"‘How dare you, Count Von Gonsenbach?’ I said. ‘Take me home at once!’

"There was something about that beautiful day, Jenny, and all the circumstances, that made it seem impossible my troubles could be true. I felt as if I must find your father waiting on the shore. The lonesomeness was horrible. I shut myself up for the rest of the day. I felt what a marked lot

mine was ; how more widowed I was than other women.

"Mrs. Schietlin said afterwards that my nature was at fault—too intense ; that another woman would have found comfort in the count and his castle. Oh, why did such troubles happen to me, Jenny?"

"Trouble happens to every one, momley," said Jenny.

"Not *my* trouble," said her mother.

"Do n't talk about it, momley," said Jenny. "You sha'n't be lonesome any more. I'll stay with you all the while, day and night, if you want me to."

"But you cannot be your father, dear," said her mother. "He was my idol. He was all the world to me. I gave up everybody and everything for him. I never thought of any one but him. I scarcely knew there was another person in the world."

"I know it, dear," said Jenny. "But the more you talk about it the worse it seems, does n't it?"

"Go out and be gay and happy," said her mother. "You have never suffered, my child!"

"I want you to talk to me just as long as it

comforts you, momley," said Jenny. "It's only for your own sake that I thought it might be better to talk about something else."

So Jenny spoke; but she knew that the June sunshine was bright and bonny outside of that darkened room; she knew that there were balm and sweetness in the morning air; and that birds were calling—birds no freer to flit and fly whither they pleased than she had once been. She had wanted to greet her home, down to individual trees, flowers, and kittens, after her long absence; but the heart to do it was going out of her.

She knew that her mother, to whom God had given twelve years in which to wrestle with her sorrow and manage it for his high design, instead of brooding over it still, ought to be out enjoying the morning which he had made beautiful for her. But she did not dare say anything more, lest her motives should be thought selfish.

When at last she went down stairs, after having soothed her mother into slumber, the buoyancy seemed to have gone out of the morning; the sunshine was not as bright as she had fancied it; and she did not feel in sympathy with the birds, nor chirp them an answering note back.

She sat down by the front door, and leaned her head listlessly against it.

She was thinking—thinking what good she had done. Her mother did not seem any happier, nor better. Had she made a mistake? Oh, no! Her convictions had been too strong, her covenant with God too solemn. She would not admit that thought.

She ran away to find Miss Goodrich and summon her for their talk. She talked to her about the doctor until she made her heart rejoice, and brought her own good spirits back.

CHAPTER XVII.

"MARGIE's coming to lunch, mamma," said Jenny, when her mother awoke.

The words acted like a stimulant. She was quite willing to rise and be dressed, and made charming for her pretty little admirer. She was a tableau in one of the piazza chairs at 12 o'clock, and she was so bright and gay that Jenny marvelled at her heights and depths.

When Margie appeared, and Jenny flew to meet her, Mrs. Stephens graciously arose and came down the path. She was so blithe as well as beautiful, that Bob, on his arrival, thought her the most charming woman he had ever met.

"Let's go in, Prinky," said Jenny, as she saw Bob at the gate with John. "I want to talk, and I can't with that strange boy around. Do you know him yet?"

"John has never brought him to see me," said Margie.

"Poor fellow," said Jenny, "how much he's missed! It was shabby in John."

"Your sister ran away when she saw me coming," said Bob to John, on the piazza, loudly enough for them to hear in the library. "You've done well to get her trained since last night."

"I suppose he thinks that will bring me out," said Jenny. "But he's much mistaken. Horrid thing!"

"Is n't he nice?" said Margie.

"He thinks he is," said Jenny. "I liked him well enough until John told me something about him."

"I thought John worshipped him."

"Oh, he does," said Jenny. "But his tastes and mine might differ, I suppose."

They had been talking in whispers, as they were separated from the people on the piazza by only the library blinds.

"Prink," said Jenny suddenly, in quite audible tones, "you don't know what a lot of new tricks I've learned since I went to the gymnasium. I can do everything now but climb a greased pole. When I can do that I'll feel that my lifework is accomplished."

"Is this the way you've been taking advantage of my absence?" said Margie. "I kept all my

promises to you more faithfully than if you had been here. I've never neglected the clubs, and I have n't flirted the least bit." Margie's remarks were quite audible on the piazza too.

"I picked up a jolly little tune while I was away," said Jenny, proceeding to whistle in a most accomplished manner one of the airs of the street that was on every small boy's lips just then.

"Hush, Jenny," whispered Margie. "What will John's friend think? Maybe he is n't used to whistling girls."

"Jenny!" said her mother, "come here."

"All right, mamma," sang she, bouncing out. "How are you, Dream-boy?"

"Quite well, thank you," said he, rising. "I'm glad to find that you are allowed to speak to me."

"Oh, yes," said Jenny. "John's decided to let me know you. He thinks it may have a refining influence. He's only kept us apart for your sake. He was afraid I'd convert you into a tom-boy. I found out all his secrets last night."

"Do n't make a fool of yourself," said John, with the blackest glance he had ever given her.

There was a sauciness and brightness about her that were rapidly undermining Bob's rigid ideas.

"Convert me in spite of him, Miss Jenny," he said enthusiastically. "I'll be a tom-boy, or anything else, if you'll agree to do the teaching."

"You'd have to talk slang!" said Jenny, in awful tones, going and standing before him.

"Hard! But I'd try," said Bob.

"And climb trees."

He shook his head doubtfully.

"And whistle."

"Shocking!" said he.

"And row and swim and vault fences, and tear your clothes to rags, and let your hair go wild—and everything else I do."

John got up at this stage of their dialogue and stalked by Jenny with the angriest face she ever saw him wear. Her mother had already been summoned to the parlor by a caller.

"How mad Johnny is!" said Jenny. "He never looked at me that way in his life before. Come back, Johnny."

He had turned toward the front door, but at its sill he was stopped by Margie.

"Do n't knock me over, John," she said. "What makes you look so black? Introduce your friend to me, that's a good boy. I want to say something

to him, and I suppose I must n't speak without an introduction."

"By no means," said Bob. "It would be highly improper. I beg your pardon. I find I have committed the error of speaking without one."

John transferred his amazement and indignation to Bob and Margie; for there they stood—strangers!—smiling at each other in the most shameless way, after having violated the rules of common decency by exchanging remarks previous to introduction. Not satisfied with boldly smiling, they suddenly, as they gazed, burst into laughter, Bob's cheeks swelling up like a fat baby's before the explosion.

"I wish you'd tell me your friend's name," said Margie. "You'll drive me to calling him Smith."

"Come, Jack, if you don't think I'm fit to be made acquainted with your sister, or your sister's friends, tell me why, and I'll see what I can do about mending my ways."

"I've nothing to say to you, Margie," said John. "You can look after your own manners; but—"

"Yes, thank you, grandpapa," said Margie.

"But, Bob, you'd oblige me by being decently civil to ladies in my house."

"He's foaming at the mouth," said Bob. "If I considered him responsible, I'd have to call him out for that remark. It's you that lacks manners. It's extremely uncivil in you not to introduce us."

"Allow me to present the biggest gander of the season to—"

"You do n't dare say it," cried Margie, capering around John in a high state of exhilaration. "You do n't dare call me the biggest goose of the season. Do it. I challenge you!"

Bob was determined not to let John escape without formally presenting him; and so as he stepped into the hall he hopped in front of him, and said in an aggrieved and quite serious way,

"If you really have any scruples about introducing me, please say so. I do n't like this manner you are taking on towards me lately."

John turned about stiffly.

"My friend Mr. Hall, Miss Barnard," he said.

"Delighted to meet you, Mr. Hall," said Margie, with a sweeping courtesy.

"Charmed to have the pleasure at last," said Bob, with an obsequious bow.

"Margie, what's the matter with you?" said Jenny.

"Is that your hat?" said Margie, snatching it from the chair. "How like my brother Dick's."

"And how is Master Dick? also Master Frank, Miss Bessie, Miss Patty, and Miss Rosie? And how are the squirrel, the dog, the three cats, and the parrot? My compliments to them all, please, not omitting the baby."

"Allow me to present my old friend Mr. Hall, Mr. Stephens," said Margie.

"And me, my fellow pilgrim and adventurer, Miss Barnard," said Bob; after which courtesies and bows were addressed to John.

"Cross off the work-basket, Jack," said Bob. "I'm even with you. I've taken tea twice at Miss Barnard's, and spent three evenings there, in the last fortnight. What nuts it's been to me to have you refusing to introduce me. Do you remember that day you picked up a hat from the hall table, and said Dick's hat was just like mine? I was behind the hall door at the moment, holding my sides to the best of my ability."

"Margie," said Jenny sternly, "you told me you had n't had a—"

"Flirtation?" said Bob. "She has n't with me, Miss Jenny. She fairly ate me up alive when I

tried it. We met by chance, the usual way—the same way I met you last evening. The baby's carriage broke down just as I was passing, and I flew to the rescue, and Miss Margie knew me, and told me who she was."

"What an adventure!" said Jenny. "Do you always have adventures, Mr. Hall? I thought it was quite thrilling the way we met."

"Yes, I do," said Bob. "I believe I was born to them. Call the work-basket square, Jack. I told you I'd get one off on you as good as that."

"It's very amusing," said John. "I can't quite see where the joke comes in, though."

"I think it's a splendid joke," said Jenny. "And so do you, you grumpy old boy. Own up, and let's all be friends. Come, let's have a grand reconciliation. Forgive me, Johnny. I won't do so any more. I've established my reputation as a tom-boy with Mr. Hall. That's all I wanted. You believe I'm the genuine article, don't you, Mr. Hall?"

"I'll believe anything for the sake of peace," said Bob. "Anything to promote the reconciliation."

"But you mustn't believe that. It's not true,"

said Margie. "I asked to be introduced to you because I wanted to tell you so. I overheard what you were saying in the library. You can see proof for yourself by looking at her. She's as neat and stylish as anybody."

"More so," said Bob.

"And she put on all that whistling and talk."

"But she *can* whistle," said Bob. "That fact is past undoing."

"She wants you to understand that I'm a reformed character," said Jenny, "and that my conduct to-day is merely a relapse, which she does n't expect to be repeated. You behold in me the work of her hands. And the truth about Johnny is that he knew how you detested tom-boys."

"I never detested tom-boys," said Bob.

John had taken the morning paper, and was reading it composedly, lying back in a piazza chair. He looked up at Bob when he made that statement. But Bob did not happen to look at him.

"And so," continued Jenny, "as he naturally wanted you to like me, he thought he'd keep me out of the way while the reform was going on, and let me burst upon you in full glory after it."

"Are there any more reformed characters

around here?" said Bob. "You've reformed Miss Margie; Miss Margie's passed it on to me; she's reformed you; and has no one done anything for John? Then I say he's slighted. And I propose that we all join in pounding him back to good nature."

Whereupon began an assault upon John, Bob and Jenny attacking him with fists, and Margie pelting him unceasingly with snowballs, which she snatched from a bush at the side of the house.

"Have you kept your promise yet, Mr. Bob?" she said. "Have you asked him that question?"

"What question?" said Jenny. "Let everything come out before the reconciliation, so that we can all start fair from that event."

"Tell, Mr. Bob," said Margie, "if you think best."

"Yes," said Bob, "he does consider you a bore."

Margie seemed so delighted by the information that it was hardly necessary for John to fly into a new fury, which he did.

But by-and-by they had him thoroughly pacified; and they stood up, Bob and Jenny, John and Margie, vis-à-vis, and proclaimed a reconciliation.

It was that very noon that they organized the "Quartette Club;" an institution founded upon a strictly sensible basis; whose first principles excluded flirtation, sentimentality, and nonsense of all sort, and whose object was fun. Boating, fishing, hunting, and picnicking excursions were to be its outgrowths; and they voted to admit from one to six little Barnards into their company on all such occasions as the Four should approve.

The Quartette Club was the promoter of some very pleasant and profitable friendships; and of much pleasant and profitable intercourse with nature, through the summer weeks.

John's lingering misgivings, his secret disappointments, were all dispelled one day when Bob, at a bedtime conference, said to him:

"I like a girl with just a dash of boyishness—enough for spice, you know. Anything but a tame, flat simpering piece of propriety!"

"What's become of that soft ideal of yours?"

"Oh!" said Bob. "Well, a man can live and learn, can't he? I'm older than I was. I've had my tastes cultivated since your sister came home."

CHAPTER XVIII.

FOR a fortnight after Jenny's return John and Margie were so busy with preparations for their Commencements that the Quartette had few meetings, and no excursions whatever. As soon as the prize essays were finished there were the lessons of the year to be reviewed for examination-day, and sundry little matters to arrange for the last day. Margie had to have a white dress. "It takes so much longer to make a dress out of nothing, or of scraps from the rag-bag, than out of goods they keep in stores, that I don't suppose I shall see anything of you till it's all over," Jenny said to her. John had encouragement to hope that he should stand first in general scholarship; and was spurred by Jenny and his own ambition to do his best.

The mornings of that fortnight were only a repetition of Jenny's first morning at home: "My mornings among the tombs," she called them, when she could feel facetious on the subject. Mrs. Stephens did not like the glare of summer sunshine in her room, and there was a languor in the sum-

mer air which disinclined her to rise ; so they sat in the darkened chamber ; she in bed, Jenny close by ; she resurrecting sorrows, Jenny patiently listening, day after day.

Sometimes a fear came over her that Jenny was growing tired, and would like to escape from the thralldom of her promises—when she would make her repeat them, and would be reassured and reassured that her daughter loved her.

Those asseverations never had the effect of reviving Jenny's tender pity. But sometimes when she rose suddenly to cross the room, or leave it, her mother would call, "Where are you going?" with a child's fear of abandonment in her voice, and the look in her eyes which Jenny well remembered seeing when she first made the confession of a lonely heart. Then the old compassionate love would sweep over her, and she would be very gentle and patient, and pitiful.

She always helped her mother dress for lunch ; and after lunch she always read to her, as she lay in her wrapper on the couch between the windows. She tried often, both by wiles and open petition, to substitute history, poetry, essays, or standard novels, for light fiction ; but she continually failed. Her

mother had a quiet persistency against which she almost always seemed to fail lately.

She was growing a little discouraged. Doubts and fears were finding their way into her mind. Her captivity had physical effects which reacted on her spirits in moods of depression. She wondered frequently now if it were possible that her own presumptuous fancies had been guiding her, instead of God's hand.

Not only had she utterly failed to lead her mother out of herself, but her sympathy had actually encouraged and confirmed her habit of morbid introspection. She seemed neither happier nor better because her daughter had found the way to her heart. It was hard for Jenny to believe in a progress she could not see; and yet she was assured at times that there must be progress, known to God, though imperceptible to her. For if she were not doing his bidding how could she account for the sweet fellowship she had with him?

Those physical effects, reacting on her spirits, Miss Goodrich constantly and indignantly perceived. Margie, coming over occasionally for a flying visit, began to perceive them. John, busy as he was with other matters now, noticed them too.

But he did not worry. He was surprised that Jenny's enthusiasm should have carried her so far, and he blamed himself a little for permitting it; but he had perfect confidence in his power to put the needed check upon her as soon as he should have time.

He had read her letters with allowance, and not feared that undue sacrifice would be the result of her rash promises, for he considered her quite competent to take care of her own interests. She was preëminently a free creature. The daily confinement in a darkened chamber of one who loved outdoor life as much as nature's wild children that were born to it; the exactions of a nervous invalid imposed upon one whose spirit had always risen to arms at the slightest oppressions, were marvels John had not looked to see.

And while he waited for an opportunity to inquire into their causes, he was obliged merely to accept them as marvels; for he could not believe that Jenny loved her mother well enough to be her voluntary slave, and he did not consider her religious emotions equal to the results produced.

When the commencements were over, when Margie's dress had been worn successfully and laid

aside, and John had gratified his friends by taking the prize for general scholarship, he came up stairs one morning to begin business.

He knocked on his mother's door, and when Jenny opened it said, in tones that could not fail to be heard as far as the bed,

"Bob and Margie are down on the piazza. There's a glorious breeze, and the Quartette's bound for a sail. Hurry up; we don't want to waste a whiff of it."

The way that Jenny's eyes shone for a second touched John's heart; then she turned her face toward the bed.

"Go, my dear," said her mother.

Jenny did not notice the words. She caught the tones, and the look of her mother's eyes.

"Thank you, momley, but I don't feel like it," she said. "You can take three or four little Barnards for ballast, John."

She positively scowled him away from the door. But he went away angry, and laid plans for a speedy and private interview.

That evening he demanded Jenny's society; but she came down to sit on the piazza, accompanied as usual by her mother.

"Jenny," said he, as Mrs. Stephens went in the house a moment, "get your hat and come for a walk. "I've got something I want to say to you."

"We can't leave mamma alone," said Jenny. "She hates to be left alone evenings."

"You don't think it's anything to leave me alone all day long," said John. "You don't seem like yourself any more. I feel as if I'd buried you and planted a weeping-willow over your grave."

Mrs. Stephens returned; and as Jenny did not heed John's winks, he took his hat in a few minutes, and went out of the gate.

Bob came over soon after, and he and Mrs. Stephens devoted themselves to each other, while Jenny sat apart in sad silence.

She felt as if she loved her mother less than usual; she felt angry toward those promises which had kept her away from John till she seemed to him dead and buried. It had cut her to the heart to see him take his hat and go out of the gate. The contrast between the present time and the good old days, when she and John were free to enjoy each other from morning till night, came over her sharply; and it occurred to her that in

serving her mother faithfully she had neglected him.

How merry her mother was ; laughing and talking and flirting with Bob as if she were of his own age. What a gay time they were having. The laughter smote on her ears. She rose and went to the gate. She thought if she could only find John she would walk with him now as long as he wanted her ; for Bob could keep her mother company, and if he were n't there she did n't know that she should care. Her mother could be happy enough when she chose. She did n't think it necessary to go down in the depths with all her friends, and drag them after.

Sore at heart, grieved on John's account, disturbed on her own, by the merry laughter that rang all the way down the path, she leaned over the gate and looked in the direction John had gone. She did not expect to see him, and her surprise was as great as her joy when he came sauntering into view. It was evening, but she thought she should have known the swing of his big shoulders at midnight.

She threw the gate open and flew, and rushed upon him breathlessly.

"Here I am, Johnny," she said.

"Minus a hat," said he, taking her hand under his arm. "You'll get cold."

"This night!" said Jenny. "How can I get cold on a scorching July night, goosey-gander?"

"Call me some more names," said John. "It sounds like old times. You haven't had spirit enough to call any one names lately. Look here, Jen, what have you come for? that talk? I want plenty of time for it."

"Don't let's have a talk, Johnny," said Jenny. "Let's have a good old visit. Let's run a race to Dr. Jenks' corner, will you?"

"No, I wont," said John. "I'd be ashamed of the way I'd beat you. You can't run worth a cent since you've been cooped up in that room so much. You're getting white and peaked and weakly. Jen, what makes that scowl between your eyes lately? Do you have headaches?"

"Sometimes," said Jenny, feeling in John's mere tones the comfort of being protected and petted and looked after, as she used to be before it took all her time to protect and pet and look after her mother.

"It's something new," said John.

"Yes," said Jenny.

"You have the blues, too, don't you?"

"A little," said Jenny.

"That's certainly something new," said John. "Now look here, there's no use in beating around the bush. I'm too mad, anyway, to come at the thing with arguments. But I can say pretty distinctly that you've got to stop it right off. I won't stand any more nonsense. I didn't half believe your letters. I thought you were away from me and had to have somebody to be fond of, and went into the thing head first, as you generally do; and that after you got back home you'd cool off, and be reasonably attentive to mother, and that we'd have the kind of family feeling all around that we ought to have.

"But, Jenny, it always has to be an extreme with you, and extremes, as I've told you a thousand times, do nothing but harm. Look at the state of affairs now. You, for some reason that I can't make out, coop yourself up in that dark room and mope with mother, encouraging her to be miserable, when you told me that your object was to train her thoughts away from herself. You are deliberately defeating your own plans.

"And look at my side of the question. You used to think me worth considering. If you're satisfied that it's just the thing to give me up the way you have, then you're a changed girl, that's all. I can't tell you how I miss you. It would be different if I was n't going off to college next fall. But the summer's just slipping away, and I see nothing of you, and after September there won't be any chances for us. Don't you think you have any duty to me?"

"No," said Jenny, quite pitifully. "Duty is n't the word. It's the thing I'd like best in the world to be with you every minute, and have our good old times over."

"There! hear your voice!" said John. "What a tremble it's got in it. That just shows how you're changed. It makes me so mad I can't talk straight. But I want you to tell me why you do it. You're the last girl in the world I ever thought would be imposed upon."

"I have told you, Johnny."

"Oh, duty, do you mean? I know you wrote me a good deal about that, but I didn't pay much attention to it. And yet I don't know but you've got the right stuff in you for a fanatic. Martyr-

dom's nothing better than lunacy, in my opinion. Half those fellows that got their reputation up by being roasted, chopped, etc., might have saved their lives and their souls too, if they'd just kept their heads level. I don't know but you've got the elements of a martyr in you, after all. So it's lunacy that's making you do so much harm where you want to do good, is it, you misguided little sister?"

Jenny did not answer. She felt crushed by John's accusations, for they were a confirmation of her own fears. She was so in the habit of accepting John's opinions as infallible, that they seemed to make it sure she had not been guided by God, but had been walking wilfully in her own way. And yet why had He accompanied her in each step of that way, and drawn her near to Him through all the patient sacrifices she had made? God was talking to her heart then, and John to her human reason.

"You've made me no end lonesome and unhappy, leaving me in the lurch so; you've broken down your own health and spirits; and you've made mother ten times as morbid as she ever was before," said John.

"I've meant well," said Jenny.

"Oh, horrors!" said John. "Your voice goes right to the soles of my boots. Who'd ever have expected to hear you mewling like a sick kitten? Look up here. Don't duck your head down so that I can't get a peep at your face. I see little enough of it anyway."

As Jenny refused to obey, John put his hand under her chin and lifted it up; and there, as he expected, he discovered tears, one lying, round and shining in the moonlight, on each cheek.

"Now, Jenny," he said, kissing one and then the other away, "do n't repeat this business; for if we have any more scenes somebody'll catch us at it and take us for lovers, and you know you'd never live down the disgrace of that. I thought you were crying. Why, it's positively awful the way you're run down lately. You see your nerves are just unstrung from what you've been through. Of course you've meant well, only too well, you poor little chicken. It's lucky there are n't any stakes around here. You'd have tied yourself to one and set fire to it before this. You've had the best intentions, and you've only made mistakes. And now we'll straighten everything out. You needn't bother

your head about it either. I'll run the whole thing for you."

"But, Johnny, you can't do anything," said Jenny. "I'm sure I've been doing what I ought to; you don't know how sure I feel of it in my heart most of the time; and it will all straighten itself out if we're only patient."

John's dignified silence rebuked her more than anything he had said.

"I did n't mean to make you think that it's nothing but duty keeps me with mother, Johnny," she said humbly. "I do love her very much. I love her better every day. The more I see how dark it is inside of her heart the more I pity her, and the more I pity her the more I love her. It is n't the same kind of love I have for you, papa; but I suppose there may be a good many kinds in the world. And it is n't the same kind I expected to have for my mother. It's something like the way I used to love my dolls—more the way a mother loves a child than the way a child loves a mother, I should think."

"Love and duty point in the same direction in this case," said John.

Jenny could not bear his displeasure. She had

never in her life resisted in the end his stronger will. It seemed a violation of their natural relations, which would threaten destruction to those relations, that she should do so; and she finally that evening, against higher than human convictions, promised to follow his guidance.

CHAPTER XIX.

BUT she lost the sweet assurance of God's approval which had been an under-current of peace in her heart, no matter how tired her arms got with rubbing, or how much her head ached, or what fears beset her mind.

John did not make any great demands upon her time for a few days. He spent the evenings on the piazza with the assembly of family and friends, which included Bob generally, and sometimes Margie, and was content to monopolize Jenny when Mrs. Stephens was asleep or engaged with visitors. But he had told Jenny his plans; and the consciousness of them, and dread of their announcement, put a constraint upon her manner up stairs, and wrought the least perceptible coldness between her mother and her. Mrs. Stephens did not confide her sorrows quite as freely; the doctor's name sometimes drifted into the conversation; and even Angeline was dragged from a fortnight's oblivion and favorably mentioned.

"Mother," said John one evening at dinner, "how do you think you'd like camping out? I have an invitation for you from the Quartette Club. Mr. Davies is going away for a week next week, Friday, and we're going to celebrate Bob's vacation by camping out across the lake. Wont you come and matronize us, and go with us to-morrow to choose the place? Bob is doing extra work so that he can get off to-morrow, and we'll start by seven and make a whole day of it, just we four and half a dozen Barnards. Margie suggested the baby, but I voted him out with very little ceremony."

"It is hardly necessary for me to go through the form of declining," said Mrs. Stephens.

"Couldn't you possibly do it, momley?" said Jenny.

"Certainly not," said her mother, with a queenliness of aspect that forbade further mention of the subject. She seemed so wholly her old sufficient self during the rest of the dinner hour that Jenny felt as if she had gone back to the motherless days.

Her coldness did not trouble John at all that evening. He rather seemed to enjoy it, being in an excellent humor.

But Jenny had never anticipated a day in the woods with such depression of spirits. Her mother made no allusion to the promises she was going to break, and she felt sure that she would not allude to them when they were alone. But none the less would she know that honorable people keep their promises. John might say what he pleased about bad promises being better broken than kept, and her mother having no right to bind her to anything that could do either one of them harm. A promise was a promise. And however good his arguments might be, there were arguments of her own which were demanding a hearing on this critical evening.

She wanted to be alone with God. She felt almost as if he were summoning her to come and talk to him about her perplexities. There had been a cloud between them lately. She longed to find her way through it back to him to-night. She began to see that in matters of conscience no one, even John, had a right to come between her and Christ. “‘Shut thy door upon thee, and call unto thee Jesus, thy beloved,’” said her heart. She must exclude all human rivals from that interview ; and then she believed that he would reveal his will ; and if once again she should know it

clearly, she thought that she would do it bravely, whatever might oppose. He seemed to be calling her away ; but she waited for her mother to break up their trio on the piazza.

Mrs. Stephens arose by-and-by and bade them a ceremonious good-night.

"You need not come with me," she said, as Jenny prepared to accompany her. "Stay and enjoy the moonlight."

The pang that her formal tones and manner sent to Jenny's heart taught her how much she had learned to love her poor, unhappy mother.

She said Good-night to John, and followed her ; but when she reached her door it was closed.

She turned away and went into her own room. She sat down by the window and rocked and rocked.

To have gone back after so many weeks of patient toil to the old relations with her mother was a pain that shut out Jenny's selfish regrets for the good times she used to have with John. And John's claims upon her society were absorbed now in the knowledge of her mother's greater need. He had no soul sick with bitter memories, weak with a lifetime's habit, to be healed and helped.

But as she sat rocking she tried to put all human influences away—John's opinions and her own emotions. She swept and garnished her heart, and asked God in. He needed no asking except that preparation. As soon as she had made ready, by forbidding human intrusion, he came. She had only to be quiet, docile, and teachable, for him to teach her.

How plainly she saw, now that her vision was no longer blinded by John's persuasions, nor her own presumptuous doubts, what she ought to do: that God wanted her to cling closely to her mother, with all the patience and sacrifice of true love; believing, while she felt his approval, that she must be doing his will; believing even that apparent discouragements were the steps of his progress. He rebuked her because she had wanted to walk by sight and not by faith; and because her human impatience had tried to hurry the stately coming of his kingdom in her mother's soul.

That invisible kingdom "within" his redeemed, he had said, "cometh not with observation." What if, without her observation it were already coming within her mother! The hope was so sweet that she took it to her heart with the comfort of a reality.

She felt brave to do the Lord's will, brave even to resist John; but she begged God to let them have some good times together in this summer before their first long separation; and she begged him to make John understand.

John saw only obstinacy and ignorant zeal in her motives, and only harm in the results of what she had done. He did not know—how could she tell him or any one?—of the results to her own soul. She had learned through every sacrifice to know Christ. Through service she had become acquainted with her Master, till it almost seemed as if she had never known him before.

Her first acquaintance, which led to covenant vows, was like a glimpse one gets under sudden and intense emotion into the recesses of a soul; a nearness that no subsequent distance can ever make unreal, and which may have in it the elements of love, but is far from being the sweet sufficiency of daily fellowship.

That most wonderful experience of the human soul—an actual friendship with One unseen, yet personal—had been Jenny's in these weeks of self-denial, patience, and prayer.

She had learned that intimacy with Christ is

dependent on obedient service. She had never taken one step astray that Christ had not seemed less personal to her. Nor had she been able merely through penitent confession to find him again, divine and human, as in the old days when he walked in streets and dwelt in houses, and mortals were his neighbors and kinsmen. She had had to undo her mistakes as far as possible, to retrieve and humbly begin anew, before she could feel his friendship close and real.

After the way before her looked straight and clear she got up and undressed, continually asking God to help her in the details, and to keep her heart brave.

She had heard John come up to bed, and she saw no light through his keyhole and heard no sound when she went exploring. She would not disturb him, as he had to rise early, but would tell him in the morning when she went to wake him.

She walked softly towards her mother's door, and was surprised to discover a light through that keyhole. She knocked and went in. She had not meant to go in until the excursionists were off the next morning, but she was afraid that her mother

might be preparing for one of her wakeful nights, and that she could not allow.

"Well, Jenny," said Mrs. Stephens, in tones that once would have bound her tongue and set her pulses going.

She was sitting under the gaslight, in a wrapper, holding a book.

"You naughty little momley," said Jenny bravely, "why aren't you in bed? There'll be a headache to-morrow."

"Undoubtedly," said her mother.

"Let me put you into bed, mamma."

Without noticing Jenny's offer Mrs. Stephens said,

"It was exceedingly imprudent in me to leave the doctor without medicine, and to come home without a professional nurse. I have always before been under his care during my absence from him; but I have no medicine to-night to act as a preventive, and the headache will have to come. However, it is not probable that the doctor will allow me a much longer vacation. I received another letter from him this morning."

"Don't sit up and read, dear," said Jenny, "and perhaps the headache wont come."

Persistent amiability was her only course, for she did not dare tell her mother that she was not going to-morrow, knowing that she was in just the mood to decline her sacrifice.

"It is as well to sit up as to go to bed and lie awake," said Mrs. Stephens.

"Aren't you going to let me sleep with you, momley?" said Jenny. "I don't feel a bit like staying alone to-night, and you always say I quiet you."

"Certainly, if you wish," said her mother, as coldly as ever, but only too glad of a companion for the dreary prospect of the night. "Get into bed at once. You should not have come here in your bare feet."

"Give me that naughty book first," said Jenny, laying hands on it. "You shall not have a headache to-morrow."

Her audacity compelled her mother to yield as she took it away.

"Now pop into bed, momley," said Jenny. "This light is going out when I count ten. One—two—three—scamper!"

"What a wild creature you are, Jenny," said her mother, sitting quite still.

But at the word "ten" she sat in darkness, for the light went out promptly.

"There," said Jenny, "you've nothing but moonshine to read by now, and I think you'd better come to bed than spoil your pretty eyes, Mrs. Stephens."

She arose, tall and stately in the moonlight, removed her wrapper, and got into bed without a word. But her eyes were watching sharply lest Jenny should escape; and when Jenny lay down beside her she let her take hold of her hand.

The protection of the child's touch kept the ghosts of her sorrows away, and soothed her to sleep at last, though she sighed when her dreams came.

Jenny awoke very early to wake John, as she had promised. She went through the usual course of pounding, pinching, and shaking; and when he was sufficiently awake to understand, she unfolded her plans to him, giving him all her reasons, as she had rehearsed them in her own mind. He let her finish, more because he was too amazed to interrupt her than because he wanted to give her a hearing. He certainly did not consider her worth a hearing. He was utterly displeased and scornful.

"Go your own way," he said. "If you can conscientiously spoil the pleasure of our whole party for an obstinate whim, why do it. You're a changed girl."

Jenny walked out of the room. She had said all she had to say, and could only ask God once more to make John understand.

Bob was coming over for an early breakfast with them. She did not want to go down. She went into her own room, and she heard Bob's voice in the hall by-and-by, and his exclamations of surprise and disappointment when John told him about her. She watched the boys and the baskets out of the gate, and then dressed and went to her solitary breakfast.

After that she went up to her mother's room. She opened the door softly, expecting to find her asleep, for it was earlier than their usual breakfast hour; but to her surprise she was sitting dressed by her desk, writing a letter.

"Why, momley, up already?" said Jenny. "How pale you look! Has that impudent headache dared to come, after all?"

"Yes, it has arrived, although I had a quiet night," said her mother, still writing. "And I have

only myself to blame. I am telling the doctor to expect me on Friday, and to have Angeline in readiness. Are n't you picnickers off yet? I thought you were to start early."

"They have all gone," said Jenny. "I decided not to go."

"Why?" said her mother, turning about.

"Because you would n't go, momley. I'd rather stay with you, if you would n't come too."

"That is not true," said her mother; and she laid her unfinished letter away in a portfolio.

Then she turned and looked at Jenny with sudden emotion in her face.

"It is not because you like to be with me; it's because you're willing to suffer for me," she said. "I see it all. My eyes have been blind; but they are open now. It is I who have been selfish! It is I who have made the wretchedness in my home! I have seen it often in the last weeks, at times when you have thought I was the most selfish, perhaps. I have been an unnatural mother. I have sacrificed my own daughter. How pale you are getting, Jenny; and there is a quiet look in your face that never used to be there. You are sadly changed; and it is all my fault."

"Why, you ridiculous little mamma!" said Jenny, patting her hair softly, as if she were a child. "You must have a very bad headache this morning!"

"Yes, those thoughts have tormented me ever since I began to realize how patient and unselfish you were. It was when I saw unselfishness in you, Jenny, that I first saw selfishness in myself. My convictions have been unsettled since I heard you were going to break your solemn promises to me; but they are firmer than ever now. Perhaps I should never have confessed them if this sacrifice of yours had not taken me so by surprise. I know what you have given up, Jenny. I know how you have always spent your summers out of doors, and how you long to be free. The prospect of this day was like liberty to a prisoner. Do you think I don't know what you have sacrificed? And, as I say, this unselfishness only brings out my own selfishness in stronger contrast. I have asked you to love me. As any one could love an unnatural mother!"

Jenny patted her hair and laughed.

"But you shall go camping out," she said, "and I will do penance while you are away."

"I don't want to go camping out unless you'll

go, too," said Jenny. "I would not enjoy a minute of it."

"I'll absolve you from all duty, and you shall go with a clear conscience."

"But you could n't help my missing you, mommley," said Jenny.

"Jenny," she said, taking hold of her hands, and looking up into her face with an appeal in her great eyes that almost brought the tears to Jenny's, "do you love me the least little bit—not from duty, but because you can't help it? Have you any feeling for me like that you have for John? Don't say so if you have n't. But I can tell the truth from your eyes. Do you think me not quite such a monster?"

"I love you dearly," said Jenny, "just for your own, own, self. That's the solemn truth, mamma. I do n't believe any girl loves her own mother better than I do mine; and just for nothing in the world but because she can't help herself."

"You did n't use to."

"Now you sha' n't go back," said Jenny. "Do n't let's ever go back, mamma. You and I have been going forward lately; and if we keep on, we'll come to better and better things for us all the time."

She thought that was a good opportunity to insinuate some suggestions ; but her mother repelled the slightest approach to advice. She would not take a word of admonition from her child ; and as Jenny tried, lamely and timidly to propose that she should be made happier by coming out of herself and seeking new objects of sympathy, Mrs. Stephens broke in upon her remarks by calling for her portfolio.

As she tore the letter she had begun to the doctor into strips, Jenny made up her mind that admonition from child to mother was not an instrument appointed for her use.

This wonderful, sudden change in her mother seemed to Jenny the crisis of all the good things she had hoped and prayed for ; and she felt unspeakably grateful that it should have come to-day when she so much needed its consoling cheer. She was prepared to receive full fruitage of her labors at once, with rejoicing.

For what else could her mother do, now that she had turned from her errors, than make progress toward better things ? What could be the result of the revelation she had had, and the frank and humble confession she had made, but an immediate

adoption of that life which by contrast to her own she saw to be desirable?

It was not long, however, before Jenny discovered that her mother had not exactly accepted the responsibility of her faults. She was surprised to find that she had not the sense of self-condemnation which her words would indicate. She seemed rather to feel herself aggrieved; to consider her selfishness a fatality; something inflicted upon her; a curse to be accepted as an inevitable fact. That she should have been created selfish, fitted to bring unhappiness to her home; that it should be her fate to demand sacrifices of her daughter, was another cross she had to bear, and under which she groaned without hope. She did not see, nor wish to be shown, that she had the power of remedy within herself.

Four days this new cloud lay blackly over her spirits. Instead of reviving the sorrows of the past for Jenny's entertainment, she constantly bemoaned her inborn tendencies and their unhappy consequences—in a way bewildering to Jenny's reason, and that would have made her hopeless if her faith had not been founded on a rock.

Those days were an excellent trial of her faith,

for she had also John's displeasure to bear. He treated her with a lofty indifference, a crushing superiority, as unlike any treatment she had ever received from him before as it was cutting to her heart and pride.

But she prayed to her Heavenly Father all the time for better things. She asked him to make her trust where she could not see ; and she succeeded in clinging to him by loving faith.

And by-and-by a helpful thought came to her.

CHAPTER XX.

SHE was bathing her mother's head one morning as she lay bemoaning her exceptional lot. God, she said, had taken all joy out of her life, and made it a weariness to herself and a curse to her children.

"I'll tell you what it is," said Jenny, in her sprightliest tones, "I believe you've got dyspepsia. It always makes people down in their minds. A good, sensible doctor would revive your spirits wonderfully, momley."

"I have no faith in doctors," said her mother.

"Of course they can't work miracles," said Jenny; "but they must know a great deal more than we do. I wish you'd let Dr. Alexander come and see you."

"That gruff old creature!" said her mother. "He has no sympathy. He has not the insight."

"Mamma, that insight's all humbug," said Jenny. "It's very nice to make up for a lack of common sense by pretending you've got an insight; but it's something no one can have—especially the

kind of people that pretend to it. I heard enough of that at the water-cure. A man who goes by his common-sense, and a practical knowledge of human nature, can tell more about you in a minute than that doctor in a year. Just try Dr. Alexander, wont you?"

"I have no objection to receiving a call from him if it will afford you any satisfaction," said her mother. "I can make my little sacrifices for you, too, Jenny," she added playfully.

Jenny did not give her time to retract before she flew out of the house to the doctor's office. It was early in the morning, and she found him in, but occupied with patients. She rather feared an embarrassing recognition, and was relieved when he did not seem to know that he had ever met her before.

He turned and looked at her when the others were all gone, as if to discover some symptoms of disease.

"I would like to have you come and see my mother, if you please," said Jenny. 'Mrs. Stephens, 79 Pearl street.' "

"Very well," said he, taking down the address. He seemed to require nothing more of her; so

she rose, wishing that he would make it easier for her to speak what was on her mind.

"She is not very sick," she said, as she backed off toward the door.

The doctor looked at her, giving her permission to go on.

"She needs exercise, I think," said Jenny.

"Very likely," said the doctor; "most invalids do. It's a favorite prescription of mine; but it is n't popular. I have to be careful how I give it. Your mother might turn me out of the house if I proposed it; and I do n't believe I want to be turned out of her house again."

His smile of recognition was so full of good humor that Jenny all in one breath poured out her regrets and apologies for that rude behavior, and her confidences about her mother.

"Mamma is very unhappy," she said. "She has had a great deal of trouble, and she can't help thinking about it all the time. She stays in the house too much, and does n't exercise when she goes out. I wish you could make her take walks instead of always driving; and if you could only coax her to go in the woods sometimes, I'm sure it would help her to forget things."

"We'll see what we can do," said the doctor encouragingly. "We'll try and help her to forget."

With Jenny's suggestions assisting his own perceptions he soon had a thorough understanding of Mrs. Stephens' case; and he began his professional services by making himself agreeable in the way best adapted to win his patient. He succeeded so well that after the first call Mrs. Stephens frankly acknowledged to Jenny that she had misjudged him.

"I am sure he would never be bluff or stern with me," she said. "He is really charming, Jenny; so sympathetic and gallant, and yet with such an air of being able to help one."

She enjoyed the sense of security it gave her to be once more under a physician's care, and her spirits rose with each visit. She had a new topic of conversation too, which made a pleasant variety for Jenny's ears.

The doctor approached the subject of exercise cautiously, and did not prescribe his favorite remedy until after several visits. But meanwhile he talked eloquently of nature's restoring arts, and was quite a poet, Mrs. Stephens said, in his enthusiasm over the healing balm to be found in the

breath of woods and fields and water expanses, for sick hearts as well as for sick bodies.

When he considered himself well enough established in her good graces to exercise authority, he told her that he had his first intelligent prescription ready. He had studied her case until he knew just what to give her.

"It's to be taken in large doses, and it's hard to swallow," he said. "You won't like it; but I shall have to insist upon it. Air and exercise, Mrs. Stephens."

She did not like it indeed. But there was something persuasive even in the doctor's authority, and instead of rebelling she sweetly remonstrated.

"You know I'm not strong enough for exertion, doctor," said she.

"Strength comes by exertion, my dear madam," said he. "You can be well if you only will. It depends entirely on yourself. There's nothing more the matter with you than with Miss Jenny. What's this I heard you say about camping out?" said he, turning to Jenny.

"Oh, nothing," answered Jenny, "except that we had made plans for it this week, and gave them up because we didn't want to go without mam-

ma. We were to have started early to-morrow morning."

"Going to have a cabin?"

"Yes, sir. John was going to get one for us girls, so that mamma could have slept in a bed. The boys were to have a tent."

"Fly around," said the doctor, "and make your preparations. Your mother will be ready to start to-morrow morning."

"O doctor, the idea of my camping out!" said Mrs. Stephens.

"It's an excellent idea," said the doctor, "a highly sensible one; and it's my prescription. Take it, or discharge me."

There was an engaging playfulness about the defiant air with which he delivered the last remark. After reiterating it he departed, to escape arguments and protestations.

He left Mrs. Stephens' mind in a perfect turmoil, which Jenny felt powerless to quell; and she determined to call a champion to the rescue.

Not John, of course. She passed him on the piazza, where he was stretched over two or three chairs, reading. He took no more notice of her than if it had been a cat or a dog crossing his path.

She could not get used to this treatment from dear old John. She felt her cheeks flushing and her heart throbbing faster as she ran down the steps and around to the side of the house.

Bob, as usual, was up in his window, which overlooked their yard. He sat tipped back in a chair with feet outdoors. Jenny did not need to call him, for he looked down and saw her. She beckoned, and in a minute he was on the other side of the fence.

"Bob, I'm in trouble," she said. "I want you to help me out."

"My life's at your service," said he.

"You know our camping party that we had to give up."

"Yes," said Bob. "I'm very sorry your mother's not well enough for you to leave her. Jack told us you were perfect devotion. We missed you so much that day across the lake that we took a unanimous vote against camping out till your mother got better."

"She's not exactly sick, you know," said Jenny. "She's sad."

"Had more than her share of hard luck in life, has n't she?" said Bob.

"She's had a good many lonesome years ; and her poor, little head's so full of trouble that of course it aches a great deal," said Jenny. "But now, Bob, I want to tell you all about it. She has a sensible doctor at last ; and he says she needs nothing but exercise and plenty of fresh air to make her well. And what do you think he prescribed to-day ? Camping out ! He has ordered our party to take her off to-morrow morning."

"Good for him !" said Bob. "Can we get everything ready in time ? Is John stirring ?"

"He does n't know it yet," said Jenny. "I have n't told any one but you ; because you see it is n't decided, and I do n't want to raise John's hopes for nothing. It's such a new and stupendous idea to mamma that she can camp out that she's perfectly stunned by it. She has n't agreed to obey the doctor, by any means ; and what I want you to do is to make her go."

"I !" said Bob. "You flatter me."

"I believe you can," said Jenny, "if you coax her, and tell her how much we all want her."

"I can speak pretty urgently on my own account," said Bob. "It would add to my pleasure wonderfully to have Mrs. Stephens of the party."

"Yes, I know it," said Jenny; "and Margie enjoys mamma just as much as you do. It would be lovely for us all to have her. If Margie were only here I'd get her to coax, too. But you'll do your best, wont you, Bob?"

"Indeed I will!" said Bob. "With my whole heart in it."

"Drop in about lunch time," said Jenny; "and I'll ask you to stay."

"Thanks," said Bob. "Most happy to accept."

Mrs. Stephens, still perturbed in mind, descended the stairs at the call of the lunch bell, and was met in the hall by Bob, rushing frantically towards her.

"You've made me the happiest man alive, Mrs. Stephens!" he said, shaking hands. "How jolly it is going to be! I never anticipated camping out with so much impatience before. You'll receive a vote of thanks from the Quartette in due time. Will you appoint me special attendant, right-hand man? You'll find me ready, willing, faithful and your most obedient at all times."

"What are you talking about, you crazy boy?" said she.

"To-morrow," said Bob; "'of all the year the



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the maddest, merriest day.' You'll have to be up with the sun. We start at seven sharp."

"Jenny is assuming a great deal," said Mrs. Stephens.

"I'm doing the assuming, Mrs. Stephens," said Bob. "I won't believe that you could disappoint us, after getting leave from the doctor and all. Margie's Aunt Jane, or Susan, or Matilda or something or other, consented to matronize us in case we ever should go camping out, if no one else would serve. But she'll be glad to get rid of it; and think of our feelings at the prospect of having some one as lively and young as we are in her place! I see consent in your eyes!

"You are in altogether too much of a hurry," said Mrs. Stephens; "and your flattery is quite too transparent. You want me because you think you can't have Jenny without me; but I satisfy all demands by insisting that she shall go any way."

"She prefers your society to ours," said Bob. "We can't blame her for that, of course; but she'll never go without you; and even if she would, I'd tease for the pleasure of your company all the same. You see if I do n't prove devoted when we get over there."

"You want suppressing," said Mrs. Stephens. "You are a very forward infant. We will dismiss the subject."

But Bob did not drop it for one moment. He kept up such an incessant fire of argument and coaxing that Mrs. Stephens said if she did decide to go she should stipulate that he be left behind.

While it was continuing in full force at the lunch table, Margie, obedient to a private summons, appeared. She was delighted at the prospect of Mrs. Stephens joining their party, and told her so, with her arms around her neck, in a most artless and effective manner.

Even John unbent from his dignity to present inducements, and make reckless offers of impossible luxuries for his mother's comfort in the woods. There was such a deafening din as they all plead at once that Mrs. Stephens, covering her ears, said,

"I shall not be responsible if I consent—you have driven me so nearly insane with your clatter."

"She says she consents!" cried Bob.

"Don't be taken in that way," said Jenny. "Don't accept anything short of a Yes. I know momley's tricks."

So they all clamored for the word Yes, until

finally she shouted it above the uproar—when the uproar was increased tenfold by shrieks of applause.

“Come on, Jen,” said John, just as if he had never spoken to her except in that pleasant, familiar manner. “You and I’ll have to be lively this afternoon to get provisions, etc., ready. We’ll leave those others to see that mother does n’t back out, while we find Goody.”

It was a very busy afternoon, John and Jenny being especially active, and ignoring past differences as they planned and worked together. Either Bob or Margie kept guard over Mrs. Stephens most of the time, and would not hear a word of recantation.

So the next morning, while the dew was on the grass, and the birds were singing matins, and most good Christians were asleep in their beds, Mrs. Stephens, the baskets, Bessie, and Patty rode down to the water, where they were met by Bob, Margie, Frank, Dick, John, and Jenny.

There was no breeze, and they rowed over. It was a lovely morning; and Jenny, pulling at the oars with her old zest and vigor, carrying her mother farther and farther from that gloomy room where they had been prisoned so many mornings, nearer

and nearer the wild woods, felt almost as if they were gaining upon the shores of some promised land together.

Bob had the stroke-oar of their boat ; and, facing Mrs. Stephens, he rallied her all the way upon the added improvement in her appearance each moment, until, as they landed, he declared she had grown ruddy and rugged, and was ten pounds heavier when he lifted her out than when he put her in.

She was tired, of course, on their arrival ; but they made a couch with the boat cushions under a tree ; and she lay in the shade, with the lapping of the waves on the sands for a lullaby, until she fell into a gentle slumber, where no dark memories intruded.

When she awoke she seemed to have opened her eyes in fairy-land, and all the more as she discovered an elfish attendant—brown-faced, black-eyed Patty—perched upon a log above her.

“ I ’m watching,” said Patty.

“ Well, you ’re not exactly one’s idea of a guardian angel,” said Mrs. Stephens sweetly ; “ but you ’re a dear little girl to take care of me.”

“ Here !” said Patty, thrusting out a flower which

had been squeezed up in her hand till its life was wilted away.

"Thank you, dear," said Mrs. Stephens, arranging it in her buttonhole, with all deference to its good intentions. "Did you pick it just for me?"

Patty nodded, never once taking her eyes from Mrs. Stephens' face, which seemed to charm her. They instituted a friendship then and there, which proved very useful to Margie, as during their whole stay the glamour of Mrs. Stephens' presence could subdue Patty's wildest and naughtiest moods.

Little by little, subtly but irresistibly, the spirit of nature grew into Mrs. Stephens' soul. The influences of skies and trees ; the solitudes ; the vision of far-reaching water, on which the elements wrought constant marvels, fair and wonderful to see ; the abstraction from human arts and artificers ; and more than all, that lofty presence of Nature which has made enthusiasts personify and deify her, and which one feels in one's own soul to testify of the divine, so filled her entire being that there was as remarkable a mental as physical change in her at the end of a week.

That week was a distinct era in Mrs. Stephens' life. She not only thenceforward took the regular

morning walks upon which the doctor insisted, and accepted every invitation to commune with nature and the Quartette in the woods or on the water, but she planned and presided over many delightful excursions with the pretty generalship for which in her girlhood and early married life she had been noted.

It was not long after they came back from the first expedition that she silenced Jenny's fears of some future return to the water-cure, by writing a courteous but very decided letter, to the effect that she had found it convenient to place herself under the care of a physician in her own home, with whose treatment she was well pleased

CHAPTER XXI.

GRADUALLY the Quartette widened its narrow circle and admitted other boys and girls to some of its festivities. As Mrs. Stephens, renewed in health and mind, began to take up society, she felt its old exhilarations, which had been sealed pleasures so many years, growing upon her. And by-and-by she entered into youthful gayeties in her own home with the abandon of her girlhood ; finding, if possible, greater delight now than then in the admiration of honest boys and girls, who said what they meant with charming frankness and enthusiasm. She opened her house once more and gave little parties for her children's friends, which culminated one evening in the middle of September in a grand fête. The lawn was brilliantly lighted with colored lanterns hanging from the trees ; there was a band of music in the garden ; and everybody said it was the loveliest time they ever knew.

The latter weeks of that summer lived long in Jenny's memory. She threw herself into their de-

lights with her usual whole-heartedness ; and she was so happy that her troubles were like a dark dream which had gone away with the night. All cares and troubles seemed to her hideous myths, conjured out of diseased brains for the torment of healthful souls. She scorned sorrow and sadness. She almost scorned one who had the heart to be sorry or sad in a world brimful of joy to be had for the taking.

Her efforts, her sacrifices, her pitiful little crosses, that she had thought large and hard to carry, seemed out of all proportion now to the reward she had received. She felt humbly grateful for such royal crowning of her feeble faith and works. It seemed as if everything were conspiring to show her how satisfying earth could be.

There was perfect harmony in her home. She had made unity in their little family trio, as she had longed to do when first she took up the labor, yet scarcely dared to hope she should be able to do. Her mother did not come between her and John. Nobody came between any two loving hearts. All were one in those happy weeks.

The "mornings among the tombs" were, of course, quite broken up. Indeed, since Mrs. Ste-

phens began to enter into alliances with old and new friends she had not a great deal of time to devote exclusively to Jenny. It was no longer an every-day occurrence for them to have private talks with each other. And when they did sit down for cosey conversation there were the details of past parties and picnics to rehearse, and fresh ones to plan for. Mrs. Stephens' health was quite established, and relapses into her old disconsolate moods were very rare and brief.

Jenny had delightful visits with Margie that summer. Bob grew every day to seem more like her very own brother; and John—why that little difference between them was bridged over by a tenderer, deeper, more beautiful love than they had ever known before, or could have known without it.

So long as they lived above their difference without alluding to it there was an unpleasant consciousness of its existence in both their minds. But one morning John made a full acknowledgment of his misapprehensions, his conceit, and his unkindness. He said frankly that Jenny's instincts had been wiser than his reason; that she had been "plucky to heroism" in living up to her convictions,

with everything against her ; and that he had been a " pig-headed brute " in his treatment of her. Then they " kissed and made up," and were dearer friends than ever.

John was never tired of praising her for the miracle she had wrought at home, praising her with the understanding that she had finished a complete work, in which no critic could find a flaw or an omission.

Everybody praised her. Bob talked about the cocoon and the butterfly, and told Jenny she had been infringing on Nature's patent to work that particular wonder. But he did not seem to think that there were greater wonders she could work.

" We had all made up our minds that the pretty mamma was a confirmed recluse," said Margie ; " and you have suddenly given her to the world as good as new. Is n't it lovely, Tommy, to think how different you have made life look to her ? She never has headaches from the blues any more. Aren't you proud ? "

And it did not seem to occur to Margie that Jenny could make life look still better, nobler, and brighter to her mother.

Mrs. Barnard, whose views were always clear,

and whose judicious praise well worth receiving, called her a little magician ; and said she would not have believed that Alice Van Sanford could be resurrected. She told Jenny that she had made her mother the very person she remembered as a reigning belle twenty years ago. And Mrs. Barnard found no fault. She discovered nothing in Jenny's work still remaining to be done.

But chiefly Goody praised her—Goody who saw straight to the roots of things. With eyes and nose roseate, and tears glistening, she told her that she could almost believe her father was alive again, it seemed so like the old days when the house was wide-awake with his “spirits.”

It was only Jenny, Jenny in her heart of hearts, Jenny retiring with God to the solitudes of her own mind, who was not quite satisfied.

She knew—often the knowledge came to her reproachfully in the midst of their merry-makings—that her ultimate work was still undone. She had indeed accomplished a great deal, almost all that would appear to human eyes ; but God, who seeth not as man seeth, and her own heart, knew that it was nothing to the real work still before her. She was afraid sometimes that she had been mis-

taken about the coming of God's kingdom in her mother's soul; and then again she believed that its foundations were laid there; and that very, very slowly it was growing towards a goodly structure.

Jenny was one of God's most grateful creatures all those weeks. Her heart was full of praises. She could never tell her Father enough how glad and thankful she was for their happy home and her good times. Every joyful emotion of her nature was a testimony—often a conscious testimony—to his kindness.

But she was in danger of being too well satisfied with present and visible possessions, and charmed by them into forgetfulness of the inheritance eternal and unseen, only to be secured by mortal warfare. It was hard, it seemed unnatural—and sometimes almost unnecessary—to think of the body's death, the soul's judgment and endless existence, in these days of physical contentment.

And yet, as long as the engrossing, superficial delight lasted, Jenny's mind had its intervals of supremacy, when alone with God it saw all things truly; when, considering time and eternity relatively, she felt the comparative nothingness of

time's endurance, and yet the awful dependence of the infinite upon the finite.

When she realized that infinity is but an endless consequence, happy or wretched, of an act done, or undone, in the body, she felt the necessity of knowing whether the two people dearest to her—her mother and brother—had in their inmost hearts accepted a Redeemer's sacrifice for their salvation; if, indeed, there were laid, deep and "not with observation," in their souls the foundations of Christ's heavenly kingdom.

It seemed to her, at those times, as if each little moment of one's little mortal life were worth nothing but to use in preparing for the real life of the soul. And she would determine to be assured very soon if it were well with her mother and John.

John was so good and upright that it seemed sometimes as if divine influences might be working within him.

She had no better reason than her own hopes for believing that her mother had recently taken into her heart an appreciation of Christ's sacrifice, sufficient to turn her thoughts toward Him lovingly. She knew from her own statement, that she had never experienced a radical change of purposes

with regard to God and eternal things. She had told Jenny that "if one believed the Bible—which of course any sensible person must—and tried to behave oneself, that was all that could be expected, or was necessary."

She had been received into the communion of the Christian church in her girlhood, under circumstances that brought her many compliments for the beauty of her appearance. After her marriage she brought a letter of dismissal and recommendation to her husband's church. She had always held the pleasantest relations with its pastors, giving them money liberally for every good work—although she had excused herself from further service on the plea of delicate health.

Never having felt in her soul the significance of the Holy Sacraments, appreciating them with her mind only, she considered it no sacrilege—on those rare occasions when neither ill health nor disinclination kept her at home—to go to the communion table in becoming attire, and with sweet seriousness of countenance.

It seemed impossible for Jenny to find opportunity for grave conversation, or to get her mother's mind attentive to vital interests; and again and

again her solemn thoughts and purposes came to nothing. There was inaction and procrastination in the very atmosphere of those days.

As Jenny was not resolute enough to compel her opportunities, the time came when God would wait no longer, but brought them to her himself.

CHAPTER XXII.

“‘Two souls with but a single thought,
Two hearts that beat as one.’”

sang Bob from the end of the parlor, where he stood pulling on some white gloves, and watching Mrs. Stephens stealing a bouquet from a basket of flowers, for his buttonhole.

“Margie,” called Mrs. Stephens.

“Yes, Mrs. Stephens,” she answered from the hall, following her answer quickly—a charming vision in white and blue.

“You will have to attend to that pair at the window, dear. Bob and I are engaged.”

Margie ran down the room, where John and Jenny, with heads close together, were leaning out of the window. She knew Jenny’s vulnerable point; and she tickled her sides till she jumped and turned upon her with her white gloves doubled into fists.

“Go away, will you, Prink Barnard?” she said. “John and I have something to say to each other.”

“No!” said Bob. “You surprise me. What

can you possibly have to say? Nothing relative to parting? Keep close guard, Margie. I'll come and relieve you in a minute."

"You nearly made me put my foot through that lowest flounce, Prink," said Jenny. "I wish you had. See if I did n't split a waist seam."

"No, you're as whole, and neat, and sweet, and pretty as ever," said Margie; "and perfectly overcoming in those scarlet ribbons. That's a lovely sash, Jenny."

"So you've informed me regularly twice a day for the last two weeks," said Jenny. "The idea of its taking two weeks to rig a sensible girl out like a wooden doll for one evening! I feel perfectly flat in all this toggery."

"Poor little thing, it should n't be interrupted!" said Margie. "What was it doing? Making its last will and testament? I'll run away just one minute, and let you finish."

"Do n't give them a second," shouted Bob.

"Come here, John," said his mother. "You shall have a bouquet, too."

John sauntered towards her; and soon the length of the room was between him and the sister from whom he was to be ruthlessly parted to-morrow

morning. He was not pleased to have any distance between them—he was offended with any individuals or circumstances that came between them—on this last evening. He felt keenly to-night, even with all the allurements of college life before him, what it was going to be to live without Jenny every day. And she, who had not the prospect of diverting novelties ; who was going to be left behind in the places where she had always had John, where old associations would continually help her to miss him, and nothing would help her to forget him—she was quite absorbed with the pain of the near parting.

The fête which was a farewell to the sub-freshman had been appointed for this night with especial reference to the inevitable condition of John's and Jenny's minds.

“They are sure to be down in the lowest depths on the last evening,” Mrs. Stephens had said to Bob and Margie, as they three, and no more, met in conclave. “There is nothing so exhausting to the nervous system as a prolonged parting. We must n't let them have any last hours and harrowing final interviews, or we shall all be as dismal and unnerved as they. So I propose that for once

the Quartette be divided against itself, and that the half here present to-day conspire with me for the good of the other half. Let us separate those two whenever we see them together, and instruct all our friends and allies to do the same. And, Margie, we'll keep Jenny running to the dress-maker's, and try and get her interested in her new robe. And I'll give them both as much as possible to do in helping me with preparations for the fête which shall come off on the evening of the fifteenth; the sacred last evening. Let our watchword be, Death to parting scenes!"

So for a week John and Jenny had never sat down to talk that their mother, Bob, Margie, or one of a dozen other friends, and sometimes two or three at a time, had not sat down with them. It had been the joke of the period to keep them from celebrating the obsequies of their approaching separation; and John and Jenny, little as the joke pleased them, could only enter into it good-humoredly, always expecting that in due time they would find opportunity to unburden their hearts. And here it was the very night before the separation, and they could not be left unmolested a moment. John was indignant at last. There was

such a thing as carrying a joke too far. They had no more than got their heads out that window, and exchanged a remark or two on the impropriety of appointing a fête for this evening, when Margie came meddling.

In spite of their objections the preparations for the fête had gone steadily on, and they were all ready now for the guests to arrive. Margie was there to help receive, as her gift for spying out and introducing strangers was well known to Mrs. Stephens. She had a talent for entertaining which her own daughter would have to acquire as a fine art. Bob had been home three days for a farewell visit, and returned to spend the night and go on with John in the morning.

John stood up like a stick and let his mother fasten a tiny pink rosebud, relieved by a geranium leaf and some pale heliotrope, in his button-hole; and he listened, with face well controlled, to the same advice she had been giving him for the last week concerning his behavior this evening. If anything had been needed to make him thoroughly mad it was to hear that advice repeated just once more. And what business had Margie to pipe up?

"You needn't feel called upon to take the slightest notice of me, John," said she. "I'll excuse you from even knowing I'm here."

"But go for every forlorn specimen you see plastered to the wall, and bring her to public notice," said Bob.

"See that you do the same, Bob," said Jenny. "Practise what you preach."

"If you're endeavoring to scare me off from you and Margie," said Bob, "I'll inform you that I intend to hang around you as much as I please. I'm not the host, and this is a free country. The Quartette seems threatened with dismemberment this evening."

"There is a pair that wont be dismembered if they can help it," said Margie. "I detect desperate intentions in their eyes. We'll have to keep strict watch not to be disgraced, Bob."

"Eternal vigilance is the price of our reputation as a Quartette," said Bob. "Suppose you take Jenny in charge, Margie, and I'll be responsible for Jack. If we miss them both at the same time we'll know what's up, and go in pursuit. You keep one eye on Jenny and I'll do the same by Jack."

"Very well," said Margie.

"You may meet with a reception you wont like," said John. "I propose to see something of Jenny this evening if I get a chance. You need n't have appointed your party for to-night."

Cries uprose of "O John, you would n't be rude in your own house!" "O John, you would n't neglect strangers!" "O John, you would n't forget the duties of a host!" "O John, you do n't mean that you are going to slight that poor, scared little Miss Pinckney! You will take particular pains to draw her out, wont you?"

He silenced them by saying that he hoped he knew the duties of a gentleman.

But he went through those duties all the evening with an abstracted, business-like air that was far from flattering to charming maidens, his eyes seldom losing sight of Jenny.

It amused him to notice how perfectly foreign her aspect was to the scene. She looked no more a part of it than if she had been dropped in upon it out of the moon. She received the timid advances of youth of tender years with an absent-minded stupidity that was fun to John but woe to the little boys.

John managed by-and-by to get near her and

whisper : " Be on the lookout for me, and we'll slip away into the garden."

Jenny's eyes brightened ; her manner brightened. She grew quite vivacious. Her persistent misunderstanding of Willy Simms' feeblest remarks had almost discouraged him from further attempts. But in the light of the beaming smile she now cast on him he felt his heart warmed and his tongue freed from a bond. They were in the midst of a brilliant flow of repartee when Jenny excused herself to steal away with John.

"Don't run," she whispered on the piazza as John prepared to obey the instincts of a naughty child escaped from authorities. "Give me your arm ; and if we promenade with dignity maybe people won't notice that it's you and I. Do n't act as if you were my brother, Johnny."

They wended their way with moderated steps among the strollers on the lawn ; they passed rustic seats occupied by pairs, and various trees whose encircling seats were also occupied by pairs ; they got as far from everybody as possible, found an unoccupied seat, and took possession.

"Now if any one bothers us," said John, "I'll mash him without a compunction, party or no

party. I wish I could clean the whole lot of them out, and have possession myself for this evening. They'll hang around till midnight, I suppose."

"Not after eleven," said Jenny. "You know mamma objects to late hours for people of our age, and she has let it be understood."

"I've had a thousand things to say for the last week," said John; "and now I've got a chance they're all gone out of my head."

"Just like mine," said Jenny.

"We'd better think them up in a hurry," said John, "for we wont do any more talking for three months."

"Do n't," said Jenny. "You make my blood run cold. Three months seems for ever to me. It does n't seem to-night as if I could possibly stand it, Johnny."

"Perhaps it's just as well that they have n't let us be together, chicken," said John, expressing his affectionate emotion by the usual method of pinching her cheek. "We wont talk about my going. Let's find some other subject."

"I'm perfectly lost for a word now I have a chance to free my mind," said Jenny.

"I haven't an idea at my command," said John.

"Well, Johnny," said Jenny, "we've often thought it was talking enough just to sit and look at each other. Don't you know how we think the same things sometimes, and can tell what's going on in each other's heads, without speaking a word?"

"Of course," said John. "Silence is speech to kindred minds. It's the highest compliment you can pay a person to enjoy sitting still with him, you know."

He took hold of her hand, and having no words they sat and thought. But they did not think the same things. Even the close clasp of their hands did not form a link between their minds. John's mind was simply filled with indefinite sadness; Jenny's was actively considering all the painful suggestions of a parting.

Not only did she realize sharply how she was going to miss John, what it was going to be to want to run to him for a little counsel or comfort and know she could not find him, and to have the days go on and on so for three months—but she realized what important changes those three months might work, how they might send him back to her something different from the John who went away. She felt jealous of any improvement

that should make him other than her own old John. She felt that if he should return modified by time and change of circumstances, it would always seem to her as if she had lost something precious which she could not find again.

Of course if she were to be with him while he made progress she would have proprietorship in each advancing step, and know no change. They had concocted certain plans which would have provided beautifully against these anxieties of Jenny's mind—if only carried out.

But they were not to be carried out. They had planned to close the house and have the family follow John. There were good schools where he was going, and good boarding-houses. But Mrs. Stephens was immovable. She hated boarding. She was just beginning to enjoy her home. She did not want to cast her excellent servants adrift. And she said that Jenny could find all the educational advantages she required at present in their seminary.

There was one very ugly suggestion in this parting which Jenny would have liked to overlook, but which she could not keep away from her thoughts—the possibility of its being protracted far

beyond their expectations. She wondered if in every long parting one must not feel the symbol, as well as the actual possibility, of death's partings. How could one help thinking, when somebody very dear was going a long journey, of fatal illnesses and accidents that might befall?

Then her soul seemed to cry out for a pledge of a reunion, somewhere and some time surely to be. She wanted a certainty to take away the pain of her fears. She wanted any assurance of another meeting, however distant, to rest her heart upon.

If she only knew that John and she were fitting for the same eternity!

She felt that in that certainty there would be quieting of her lesser fears. What if this dear human face—towards which her eyes lifted with an intensity of gaze that seemed trying to fix each feature in her heart, past forgetting—what if it were to be marred by accident and paled by death? She could bear the thought even of that, if she were sure that as long as their two souls should live they should live together, in some fair mansion already being fitted for their home among the gardens of God.

“Are you cold, chicken?” said John.

"No," said Jenny.

"What makes you shiver? What makes your eyes glare so? They look as if they were going to gobble me up."

"Johnny," she said, pinching the hand she held, "suppose something should happen off there, and I never should see you again."

"Don't talk that way, Jenny," said he. "I'm more than half inclined to give everything up and tie myself to your apron-strings for the rest of my life. The manliness is all oozing out of me. Don't help me to be a coward, you old Spartan girl. You mustn't admit the possibility of not seeing me again. Other brothers go off to college; and not one in a thousand but comes back heartier and tougher than he went away. Accidents, you know, are the grand exceptions to the general rule. Don't be doleful, ducky. Of course it's a different thing for us to part from what it is for most brothers and sisters. We've been bound closer together by peculiar circumstances—and not only that, but by peculiar natural sympathy, too, I think—don't you?"

Jenny squeezed his hand for answer.

"And yet," said John, "it is necessary we

should be separated ; but we'll both be very busy and the four years will slip away quickly ; and they're nothing, anyway, compared with all our lives together afterwards. And there will be a great many vacations. You must think of the vacations ; and the times when you come to see me take the prizes, Jenny."

"But you can't be perfectly sure of those things. I'd like to have something *perfectly sure* for comfort, something that you wouldn't have to say 'if' or 'perhaps' about ; but would be just like a rock under you."

"Well, I can't warrant my return, you know, Jenny, in case smallpox should come around this winter ; or guarantee to keep alive if the train tumbles down an embankment on top of me ; or promise to put myself together again like a dissected map if I'm blown to atoms by the boiler's exploding. But I can assure you that all the probabilities are against any of those things happening."

"But, Johnny, if they should—and they might, you know—it wouldn't be too horrible to bear if we were sure of something afterwards. Do you think we'll both go to heaven, Johnny dear ; and

take our walks, and have our talks, and all our good times, together there; and be John and Jenny to each other always?"

"I'd like to say Yes to that question," answered John. "Perhaps I'll be able to some day. I think you've done your best this summer to make your 'title clear to mansions in the skies.' Isn't that the way the hymn goes? And that reminds me of one of the things I've had on my mind to say to you, Jenny. You know I've never thought much of the religion that turns your mind topsy-turvy and ends there. You were a little too excited in the beginning for me to expect much good from it. But I've watched you and studied you, and your religion has stood a pretty fair test this summer. I'm satisfied that it's genuine—perfectly satisfied, Jenny. I'm glad I've had this opportunity to tell you so before I went away.

"But I'm not you, and I never could come at the thing the way you have. I've got to take my own time, and know what I'm about, and make up my mind deliberately after looking at all sides. But I am thinking, Jenny. You have set me thinking. I often think what business or profession I'll take up after I get out of college; and in

the same way I think what I'd better do for another stage of life. I know it is a good deal more important to choose right and plan right for a life that's always going to last; but just because it is so important I've got to come at it deliberately, with my eyes wide open."

"I don't see what you have to stop and think about," said Jenny. "You only need to make up your mind to follow Christ; and with his help you could do that now, in a minute."

"Have patience, chicken," said John. "You just have faith in that Bible you gave me. I can get all the teaching and help I need out of that; and it'll bring me through one of these days, I think. Then I'll write you about it. And in the meantime do you keep your heart up."

"Well, we've had our parting interview, after all, have n't we? And it's lucky the number's been limited to one. I don't think I could have stood many of them, could you?"

"No, indeed," said Jenny.

"Do you feel a little encouraged, Jenny?" he asked—"cheered in your mind the least bit?"

"Oh, yes," answered Jenny, smiling at him. "I'll wait for the letter."

Their respite did not last much longer. They had exchanged only a few more remarks when they heard Bob's voice not far away, inquiring if John had been seen in that neighborhood.

John had no idea of skulking behind a tree. He rose and made his presence known as Bob came nearer.

"You 'artful dodger'!" said Bob. "How did you ever get away from me? You want to skip up to the house about as fast as your feet will take you. You have n't more than time to save yourself from disgrace."

"All the skipping that's to be done you'll please do yourself," said John, "and leave Jenny and me alone. It's not remarkable that we've got a few things to say to each other to-night."

"But, my dear boy," said Bob, with his hand on his shoulder, "you're missed and inquired for and expected, really."

"You might as well go, Johnny," said Jenny; and he rose and sauntered away.

"I suppose I would n't dare sit down there," said Bob, "you're so mad at me for sending John off."

"I'm not mad," said Jenny.

"Only wounded," said Bob, sitting beside her. "You've been having a regular old pow-wow together, have n't you? Wept yourself to a jelly?"

"Do n't be vulgar," said Jenny.

"You might drop a tear on my bier," said Bob.

"I shall miss you very much, Bob," said Jenny gravely, "very much indeed; and whenever you come back in vacations I shall be almost as glad to see you as if you were really my brother. We've had such good times together this summer, have n't we?"

"Do n't allude to them," said Bob, pulling out his handkerchief and sniffing; "it's unfeeling."

"It seems a great deal more than two months since that time I first saw you, does n't it?" said Jenny.

"It seems as if I'd been hanging around here indefinitely," said Bob. "I'm as homesick to go away from this house as if I really belonged in it."

"You do," said Jenny. "This is the Quartette's native heath. It was up on that piazza we organized. Bobby," turning to look in his eyes, "are you going to be a good little boy when you get away from your big sisters?"

"Smoking, chewing, drinking, swearing—flirting even, I abjure for their sakes," said Bob.

"No joking?" said Jenny seriously, for she had had pangs of anxiety on Bob's account which she need never feel for John. Bob, she knew very well, was beset with dangers which were not even temptations to John's different organization.

"Honor bright!" said Bob.

"Look here," said Jenny, "I'll bind you. Will you wear my colors and do battle for my sake?"

"I will, Jenny," said Bob; "and I'm honored by your asking it."

"Scarlet is my color, you know," she said. "Now you take this bow, Bob," pulling one off her sleeve, "and you keep it, and put it somewhere where you'll be reminded what you've promised me."

Bob took it reverently.

"You'll hear from it," he said, "you certainly will, Jenny. I swear allegiance to scarlet. Scarlet shall be my—"

"Well! well! well!" said Margie, putting her head around the tree. "If I ever could have believed I should live to see this day! Jenny missed, pursued by authorities, found flirting under a wal-



- New water, a little rain
 - and the grass is green.

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nut-tree! Jenny of all girls! and with Bob of all boys! O Quartette, thou art shaken to thy foundations!"

She laughed with a provoking merriment.

"Flirting! No indeed!" cried Jenny, snatching the little ribbon in the twinkling of an eye.

But Bob very quietly took it out of her hand and put it safely in his pocket.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"DRIVE around to the Seminary, Michael," said Mrs. Stephens, as they left the dépôt.

"Now, Jenny," she said, when they reached the Seminary gate, "be resolute, my dear. Go in and find out all about your lessons, and try and put your heart in them at once."

Jenny did try ; but her heart had followed John, and would not come back at her bidding. She made very poor recitations at first, finding it especially hard now to get back into the habits of study which she had dropped, without leave or license, in the middle of the last school year, to take up desultory historical reading.

When her mind ought to have been occupied with the lessons she was apparently learning, as she bent over her books, it was comforted and filled with the contents of a letter which she had fastened between two pages, and which she read over and over and over, although she could have closed her eyes and recited it. She liked to see the very

words John's dear fingers had made. It was not sufficient to read their copy in her brain.

This was not the letter John had promised on the last evening. There was no allusion in it to their parting talk. Indeed there was hardly room for anything more than his graphic and detailed description of the arrival. Jenny had nothing to skip when she read it aloud to her mother and Goody and Margie.

They four sat in the library and made the room ring with laughter over John's account of Mr. Peters—whom he found awaiting him at the dépôt, ready to do the duty of a guardian, in launching him into his college career, and steering him clear of its first dangers.

"He was hazed to within an inch of his life," said John; "and he's particularly afraid they'll put me in a coffin and drop me underground, and leave me alone at midnight to climb out of a grave to the best of my ability. The nervous effects of such an adventure he can state, from personal experience, to be undesirable; and he is willing to hang around for a week, with a constable, to provide against my being buried. I'd like to see a force of sophs strong enough to get me underground!"

Mr. Peters, John also said, insisted upon accompanying Bob and him when they bought their furniture, and advising with regard to each article. And he never failed to improve a pause in the conversation by inserting an axiom, concerning the attitudes to be observed by freshmen towards upper-classmen, the faculty and antagonistic sophomores.

Mr. Peters was much agitated on the subject of societies.

"The two best ones are rushing us furiously," said John; "and Bob and I have pretty nearly decided which to join when we get our bids. I'm sorry our tastes don't happen to agree with Papa Peters, as it wounds his tender little heart not to be able to have the prospect of giving me a brother's grip."

There was a long and thrilling account of a desperate row between freshmen and sophomores, which took up the best hours of a night, and from which, of course, the freshmen came off conquerors. Accounts of those little contests in which the freshmen met with ignominy—stamped beneath their brows in badges of black and blue—were carefully suppressed from John's letters; and Jenny was led

to infer that defeat and freshmen were terms no man had ever coupled.

In the second letter they had received their bids, made their choice, and been initiated into the mysteries of a band of brothers whom eulogy could only fail to represent to friends at home. Such a constitution as they stood upon, such an organization as they had reared, such aims as beckoned them onward and upward—were theirs only, and by them only to be attained! Jenny felt that the Quartette was cast into midnight-shade. The letter was chiefly a eulogy on the society; though, as a minor matter, an account of another row, redounding to the glory of the freshmen, came in.

Letters continued to arrive; but Jenny waited with hope long deferred for the promised one. And meanwhile she was so taken up with John, her heart was so sore with missing him, her mind so busy continually learning and reciting his letters; and she was so anxious and impatient—so importunate with Him from whom “cometh down every good gift”—for a certain letter that would ease her heart’s sorest pain, and her mind’s acutest anxiety, that her mother was thrown far into the background of her consciousness. She was per-

fectly unmindful of the fact that once her mother had absorbed her best thoughts and energies, and that still she had much to do for her.

But God was not unmindful. He wanted her to finish the work she had begun to do, and had so far done well for him. So he led her in a way of his devising.

She came home from school one afternoon under Margie's umbrella. But she would not let her protect her as far as the gate, having already taken her out of her way, when she was in a hurry to get to the baby, who was cross with measles. She had on her waterproof and rubbers, and she ran a block after dismissing Margie. But at the gate she felt a temptation to go and have a good time with the rainy day; and she pulled the hood of her waterproof up over her hat and walked on.

She blew with the course of the wind, whirled about with the eddying gusts, dipped her toes in puddles till they touched bottom, lifted her face for the rain to splash—and held fellowship with nature's mood which did her good, and made her feel more like herself than she had felt since John went away.

When at last she came home, after an hour's dissipation, she met Dr. Alexander at the door.

"Here you are!" said he. "I was just starting out on a search for you myself. You have been in great demand for an hour."

"What's the matter?" said Jenny.

"Don't let me see that scared look again," said the doctor, "or I sha'n't make use of you. Your mother is sick, and she has been fretting for you at such a rate that I thought you had better be found. Take off those wet things before you go into her room; and wait for my orders before you begin to help me." He filled the door with his broad form as Jenny would have darted by him. "You must not let her get frightened. I want you to quiet her. Will you?"

"Yes, sir! Yes, sir!" said Jenny, excitedly. "But she wont—she wont—" She could not get out the dreadful word die.

"No, my dear," said the doctor. "Nothing of the kind. It's an attack of pneumonia; and she'll be over it soon with the right care. But I don't want her frightened; and I think you can do more with her than I can to-day. She doesn't seem to have as much confidence in me as usual."

He moved aside, and Jenny ran by up to her room, where she made herself quite dry before she went to her mother.

"She's better now," said Miss Goodrich, answering her face as she opened the door.

But she looked very ill to Jenny; and then Jenny remembered that she had looked pale that morning. She had been too preoccupied to inquire about it; and Mrs. Stephens herself had been too preoccupied to complain of symptoms of illness; for she was in the midst of reorganizing a club which had been long dead, and which was to wake up their dull little town in the coming winter.

She put out her hand. Jenny reached and took it in a moment; and she felt it clasp hers closely. As long as the danger and suffering lasted she was hardly freed from that close clasp; and it said a great deal to her. It spoke the same language as her mother's eyes, which sought hers constantly with the supplication of helpless fear. She scarcely said, in words, anything more than "I am very sick, Jenny," which she repeated often.

Jenny could only tell her over and over that she would soon be better; that the pain could not last much longer; and that the new medicine the doc-

tor had given was going to act like a charm. Generally she believed all that she said, and could look at her mother with a steady countenance while she spoke. But sometimes, when the breathing was very difficult, and it seemed almost impossible to do such a little thing as draw air into the lungs, Jenny felt fear too—like that she had felt with John, in the garden, on their last evening; and she thought that, in illness as in absence, one could have no rest of heart without assurance that, strong and safe beyond all mortal danger, there were eternal possessions secured by faith to the souls that one loved.

She blamed herself for delaying to seek that assurance in regard to her mother. She thought how terribly she would have to blame herself if at any moment the struggling breath should cease, and there should be only silence to answer her doubts for evermore. She found no comfort in her mother's face, for all the promises she gave her failed to relieve the fear of something that was written there.

It was beyond Mrs. Stephens' appreciation that her pain could end in restored health. Death is apt to seem the only possibility, life the only im-

possibility, in such a close battle for breath. But Jenny felt sure that it was not mere bodily death she anticipated. She believed that however her mother might dread the dissolution of her body she must also rejoice for the ending of a widowhood which she had mourned so bitterly, and for a reunion that she had awaited so impatiently—if to her death meant the regaining of her husband. Jenny read no rejoicing in her eyes at any time. The more she studied their meaning, and interpreted the desperate hold of that hand on hers, the more she was convinced that through dying her mother feared to miss for ever her husband, and her neglected Saviour.

In spite of Mrs. Stephens' mental agitation—which caused the doctor fluctuations of despair—the time soon came when she was pronounced out of danger.

It was with a very contrite heart that Jenny thanked God for the dear life He had spared ; and with a very earnest determination that she promised to find out, as soon as possible, if her mother needed any help that she could give her. She intended to wait until her mother was strong again before speaking of those fears that had clouded her

illness. But her mother was more anxious to speak of them than she.

"Do you think any one will come to disturb us, Jenny?" she said one morning, as she lay weak and pale in convalescence. "I want to talk."

"There isn't any one to come, momley," said Jenny. "But I must n't let you talk. What would the doctor do to me?"

"He wont know it," said her mother. "He'll only be surprised the next time he comes to find how quickly I have got better. He will think it is the medicine, Jenny; but you and I will know that it is the comfort you have given me."

"I hope I can comfort you, dear," said Jenny.

"I thought you would understand when I was in such danger," said her mother. "I tried to let you know what was the matter. The right word from you would have sent all my fears flying; and then I should have got better at once. My fears kept me back more than the disease itself. Jenny, why didn't you speak? Your lips seemed sealed to the words I wanted and was all the time expecting. Why didn't you tell me that if I died I would go to heaven? That was what I wanted to know."

"Nobody can tell you that as well as your own heart, momley," said Jenny.

"Perhaps you don't believe it," said her mother. "I never thought that that could be the reason why you kept still. Am I such a wretch? Do you think I am more fit for the other place than for heaven?"

"You are the dearest mamma in the world," said Jenny. "But the Bible says fitness doesn't have anything to do with it, you know, mamma. You never told me whether you felt sure of heaven yourself, and how could I know whether to feel sure about you?"

Jenny was trying to speak wisely, but she felt very unwise, and very anxious just to follow the promptings of her impulses, and throw her arms around her mother's neck and tell her that she was too dear and precious a mamma to be in danger of endless death. It seemed so indeed, when she held her near and looked in her lovely face; but Jenny knew better than to set her own feelings against the Bible's plain statements, and she remembered a verse which says, "Except ye repent, ye shall *all* likewise perish,"

"Dear momley!" said she, patting her hand.

"How strangely you act," said her mother. "If you think I am doomed to an eternal separation from your father, tell me so, and give me your reasons for sitting in judgment on your mother."

"I do n't sit in judgment, darling," said Jenny, "I only can't see down to the bottom of your heart. God knows—and do n't you know too, mamma, about your own self?"

"I know that I am nervous and disturbed. I am morbid without cause. That idea has taken possession of me that I am not prepared for heaven, and it torments me like a nightmare. I was never so ill but once before, when you were born, Jenny. I was afraid of dying then; but your father comforted me. He believed that I was good; but that was before I was tried. My trouble is what has made me hard and cold all these years. It has just frozen everything womanly and lovely in me. Even the selfishness I was born with and reared in appeared differently before I was so unhappy. But, Jenny, I have been better lately, since you have been making a mother of me. I have softened and warmed and melted into something quite womanly under your training. I was getting rather proud of myself. And I think that God must approve of

me more than he used to ; for as long as he has given me children, he can hardly have anything better for me to do than be a good mother to them, and that I have tried to be lately, Jenny."

"You've been the dearest mother in the world," said Jenny.

"How you keep saying that over, and yet refuse to let me think that I can go to heaven," said her mother. "I have been feeling so much gentler and better and happier than in years past—such a new creature, Jenny; and that shows that it must be only my own morbid condition that makes me fear I am not ready to meet your father."

"Yes, momley," said Jenny. "If you know in your heart that you love Jesus Christ, and that you do what he tells you to, you may be sure you are ready."

"You wont say positively that I *am* ready," said her mother.

"How can I, you unreasonable darling," said Jenny, "unless you will open your heart and let me look in?"

"We wont talk any more," said her mother. "I am tired and uncomforted, Jenny. Run away."

"Let me stay, momley."

"No, I want to think. I want to be alone, for a wonder."

"That," thought Jenny, having kissed her and gone away, "is because God has something to say to her all by herself. She does n't know why she wants to be alone ; but it is because God has called her to come and talk to him."

"Please comfort her and teach her, dear Jesus, for I do n't know how," was the prayer of Jenny's heart that day.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"MRS. STEPHENS wants you, Miss Jenny," said Eliza, as she came back from a walk, in the afternoon.

She had scarcely opened the door when her mother said,

"You are right, Jenny. I can tell you—you can't tell me—what is in my secret heart. I have been searching ever since you left me for a little of the trustful love which saves souls, and I have n't found any—the least bit, Jenny. It would be blasphemy to dare to call the feelings that I have love. I want Christ to save me because I am afraid. I want him to take me to heaven, not to see Him, but my husband. It is my husband that I love and want to see. It is n't Christ. I would like to make use of Christ. I would like to take advantage of His pardon to get in where your father is; but then I would want nothing more of Him.

"Isn't that wicked, Jenny? Did you ever know anything more dreadful? But it is the truth, the shocking truth."

"It is a great deal to get at the truth, momley," said Jenny. "It is a long step up. Now if I were you I would try and not think of dear papa any more. If you can think of nothing but Christ you will soon get right with him. You can't help loving him if you put every one else away and just think about him. You know there's nothing he likes better than to teach people who want to learn."

"It is very simple," said her mother. "I have not been a communicant for twenty-five years without learning the orthodox method of conversion. I know there must be supreme love for Christ, and faith in his atonement, followed, of course, by a consistent life. And it seems rather strange that I should have been a communicant so long without ever having my conversion questioned by myself or any one else. Jenny, I have never been converted. No wonder I did not feel sure of entering into the kingdom of heaven when I was so near its gates. I was near enough to learn the truth. I am thinking of the verse that says, 'Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.' I never became as a little child, and turned about from all my faults and be-

gan to walk the other way. I was never more wilful and complacent and self-satisfied than on that Sunday when I made those professions ; but I had some sentimental, surface experience that I thought was very beautiful and devotional ; and that of course those who received me into the church mistook for something deeper.

“Jenny, what miracles you have wrought in me. I never owned to myself that I was a supreme self-lover till this summer ; and to-day I am frightened by my presumption in daring to commune with those who love Christ better than themselves. I shall never go to the communion-table after to-day. How could I have been so blinded with vanity as ever to feel fit to go ? I have thought with remarkable clearness of mind since you left me this morning, and it is very strange how I have been able to recall the Bible verses that I needed.”

“That was God talking to you, mamma,” said Jenny. “I knew he was here when I went away.”

“Do you think so, Jenny ?” said her mother. “What a strange child you are.”

“I knew he would come and make you love him, and make you sure of heaven,” said Jenny joyfully.

"My child," said she, "he has neither made me love him, nor made me sure of heaven. I am only more wretched than before—more hopeless, more stony."

Jenny looked at her with the sadness of a patience that was almost tired out.

"He has not made me love him; and you cannot make yourself love," said her mother, "any more than you can make yourself breathe, or the wind blow, or the rain come. Little children love easily, but not women of my age. I have never loved him best. I never shall. I feel convinced of it."

"I shall never stop asking him to make you," said Jenny. "I shall beg him until he does."

There were hope and comfort in the resolution of her tones. Mrs. Stephens clung to the knowledge that her child was interceding when she dared not lift up her own cry unto God. Her soul had no cry but this: "Let me into heaven to see my husband. Let me in where he is." It was her only honest, earnest petition. She dared not offer it lest there should be impiety in its selfishness. And she would not offer an insincere petition. Her pitiful human pride forbade her begging the King of heav-

en to make her love him when she felt that it was her deepest shame not to love him without compelling. So she could not pray at all; and her only comfort was the knowledge that her child prayed for her.

Very slowly the days of her convalescence dragged along; and when she ought to have been quite strong again, she was only able to sit up and walk about a little. The doctor tried his usual methods of enlivening her all in vain, and he asked Jenny rather reproachfully why she did not cheer her mother up, as he bade her. "She has something on her mind, I'm afraid," he said. "You ought to be able to get at it. It's not to be expected that she'll confide in me."

"Momley," said Jenny after that, "I can't bear to see you so weak and pale, now when you have had time enough to get strong. It is this trouble on your mind. I do n't know enough to talk to you; but perhaps if you would send for Dr. Dana he could tell you exactly what you want—he has preached to people and helped their souls for so many years."

"My dear," said her mother, "what more can he tell me than the Bible tells me? Can he have

anything more to say to me than God? I know enough. I only need to act. No human influence can make me love God more than your father. Keep on praying, Jenny. You are my only hope. Talk to God about me ; but do n't talk to me, except to tell me that you are still praying."

She seemed strangely set apart in these days—indrawn. There was a proud reserve in her manner, even with Jenny. The dignity of her separation from creatures, and the turning of her mind towards the Uncreated, overshadowed her.

They were terrible days, filled with the fear of perpetual banishment from her husband, which no human sophistries could hush back into the slumber of years. There was no courage, no peace, no brightness in them, no hope, except as she clung to the knowledge of her child's intercession, the way she had clung to her hand when death threatened her.

She read the Bible diligently ; but she found in it no other way of salvation than the way of love. She read over and over again the tragedy of Christ's passion, dwelling upon its cruelest details ; and she said to herself, "It was all for you ; it was all for you," until she awoke the emotion of gratitude

in her breast, and tried to kindle it to love. She would fan and nurse the little flame until she was almost ready to believe that it was worthy the high name of love—when pride would bid her compare it with those vast emotions of tenderness that went forth unbidden toward the husband her eyes had not seen for years; and she would scorn to offer anything so paltry to the Son of God, who laid down his glory and bore shame and agony for her sake.

“Don’t compare, momley,” said Jenny, when her mother once talked long enough with her to acquaint her with that experience. “If your heart turns toward God the least bit perhaps he will take that for love, and make it grow.

But her mother answered proudly that she would not offer her least and poorest to the Lord of heaven; for her best must be mean enough. She would love him well, and love him for himself, or not at all. She would not creep into heaven through the way of his sufferings, and then scarcely thank him.

“You love him some, or you could n’t feel so jealous about the kind of love you give him,” said Jenny. “All the rest of it will come before long,

mamma. It must, you know; because I keep asking."

The courage and assurance in her tones would sometimes rouse such hopes in her mother's heart that she would quietly fall asleep at night, expecting to awake new-born to spiritual life—as a baby awakes to the beginning of earthly life—loving one when her eyes opened whom she had not loved when they closed.

And because that love never flooded her soul, as the dawn the morning, she would feel discouragement bordering on despair.

"I am afraid it is too late, Jenny," she said, "for me ever to answer 'Yea, Lord,' to the question, 'Lovest thou me *more* than these?'"

"Perhaps God is waiting for you to pray, too," said Jenny. "Perhaps he wants you to ask him before he will do it."

"My whole soul is one prayer now," said her mother. "I have got beyond words before I have dared to use them."

"The doctor scolds me all the time," said Jenny, "for not helping you with the troubles that are on your mind."

"He finds that air and exercise wont reach this

case," said her mother; "though I feel refreshed by my drive this morning. I told him he must n't ask me any more questions, as I could not talk freely to him; and he said if I did not try something to divert my mind he should threaten me with consumption, and have me diverted by force. I wish I *could* do something, Jenny."

"I have thought of that, momley," said Jenny. "I have thought that perhaps working for Christ would help you more than anything else, now you are getting a little bit stronger. I never really felt as if I knew him, and got near him, until I began to do what he told me to. And as soon as I began to obey him, it was wonderful how much better I loved him."

"As soon as you took up your cross and followed him," said her mother, "the way the Bible says those who are worthy of him must do?"

"Yes," said Jenny.

"I was that cross."

Jenny colored. "Mamma dear," she said.

"Yes, you can say 'Mamma dear,' honestly now," said her mother. "That is your reward, my blessed child."

"I am glad," she said presently, "that you spoke

of my working. I have thought of it; but it seemed presumptuous in me to assume that I was fit. You think, dear, there is a little love in my heart. I wont dare call my feeling that; but I should like to take up my cross all the same. I should like to begin backward if it wont be wrong. I should like to take up the cross first, and see if perhaps the love would follow. I haven't any selfish mother to suffer for, and teach how to be the true mother God meant to have her; but I know a little cross that is ready for me."

"Take it up, darling," said Jenny.

"You wont think it is worthy the name," said her mother; "but it is the only one I find ready.

"The love of society used to be a perfect madness with me, Jenny. You will never care enough for society yourself to know the dangerous fascinations of reigning and charming and riding over rivals. Of course, at my age, I could never become absorbed in it as I used to be; but I could very easily allow it to make me neglect more important things—as I am convinced I have been doing this summer. Its charms have all come back to me afresh. I have felt almost a girl again, and it has been good for my health and mind to a cer-

tain extent. But I know that I have gone far enough. I was preparing to get in too deeply. With this new club, and the sociables, and all—whose arrangements I was to superintend—I should have left no time for anything else. And, Jenny, time is precious in this short life, isn't it? I learned its value in my illness. I have wasted too much already on my selfish sorrow. There is a great deal to do for the poor and sick and sinful. There are more sufferers than comforters. I want to take the time I was going to lavish on mere amusement and give it to some one who needs it. I want to begin backwards again. Christ said 'Feed my lambs,' after Peter had answered, 'Yea, Lord,' to 'Lovest thou me?' Do you think he will let me feed his lambs before I answer, 'Yea, Lord'?"

"Of course he will, mamma. You wouldn't want to feed them if you didn't love him already."

"It is that word 'more' that I could not say 'Yes' to, Jenny. But if you will find me some lambs to feed, then I can give a reason for resigning my position as president of the club. I will tell them that I will help them a little with their entertainments; but that I have taken up new objects, and cannot give them the attention I had promised."

It will look very strange, and I shall be called whimsical and selfish, and all sorts of things. But I mustn't mind. Does it seem a very small cross to you, Jenny, to dread being misunderstood, and to be obliged to make an awkward retreat when one has always had the reputation of doing things gracefully? You are not your weak, vain mamma, you know."

"Of course it doesn't seem small!" said Jenny. "But, mamma, you take my breath away! For it is the queerest thing I ever heard, that I should happen to have a little flock of lambs on my hands that I'm puzzled to death what to do with. It is a great secret. I have n't dared tell you. But I'm going to pour out now. You just wait till I come back!"

All the way along the hall, as she ran to her room, her heart sang praises; for her mother's language was the language of one who loved, and in the light of love saw her sins without pride's palliations or disguises.

"She will know it is love before long," said Jenny to herself; "and she wont have to *try* to put Him first. I will keep still and wait."

CHAPTER XXV.

“Now, listen,” said Jenny, coming back with a letter in her hand. “It is from Bob, mamma. I got it two or three days after you were taken sick. I’ll read it without skipping. It is headed :

“‘A ROMANCE IN REAL LIFE.

“‘DEAR JENNY: John has given me permission to write you on special business, though I am not sure I should have waited for his permission. I believe adopted brothers have some rights.

“‘I am the possessor of a secret that I want to share with you. I think I should have betrayed my trust and confided in you before I came away, if I could have got you alone long enough.

“‘You know my talent for stumbling on adventures. If there is a mystery to be unravelled, or a secret to be dug up, I generally happen to be around at the time the operation is performed, and have a hand in it. And as for meetings—I never can meet any one in the regular way.

““ Meetings being the subject under discussion, did it ever occur to you how romantic our first one was ; when, “like torrents from a mountain source, we rushed.” etc.—all by the light of the moon ? ”

“ He likes to tease you,” interrupted her mother.

“ He does n’t succeed,” said Jenny.

““ But not to digress. I have unravelled the mystery of Goody’s letters. I have dug up the secret that we have had our fun and our serious speculations about, and I must tell it to you.

““ One night not long since, from my window that overlooked your yard, I saw a man come creeping around the corner of your house. I turned out the gas and kept an eye on him, with a view to protecting the family plate. But instead of trying the doors and windows he sat down peaceably under a tree and proceeded to wait. And before long a woman came creeping around the rear corner of the house—which woman was no other than Goody.

““ I thought I had the richest romance of the season—Goody and a lover meeting at moonlight by appointment ; and it was all I could do to keep the joke to myself. But after I saw the meetings repeated on several moonlight nights, and discovered that Goody always gave the man something,

I began to think he might be a worthless creature who was bothering her ; and between curiosity and wanting to help her, I rallied her, the first chance I got, on her flirtation, when she burst into a weep and poured out a tale.

“‘It is long and thrilling, and I’ll give it to you condensed, for the reason that I am too tender-hearted to linger on its details, and also because I am limited as to space by your big brother, who at present holds suspended over my head a deadly weapon—provided against sophs—ready to let fall in case I use up more than my allowance of paper. Here is the tale :

“‘Man is her only brother ; was promising youth ; idolized by her ; struck down by fever ; mind left queer ; got violent ; sent to asylum ; been skipping in and out of asylums for past ten years ; wife ; four children ; wife, dressmaker ; all supported by dressmaking and housekeeping professions—principally housekeeping, says suspicion ; letters received from brother in his best moments ; sister’s joy on receipt of letters accounted for—symptoms of restored reason. Lately dismissed from asylum ; went home ; wife died suddenly ; did n’t inform sister ; buried wife ; sold worldly goods ; packed up

children ; brought them on to sister ; no visible means of support ; threatened with more insanity ; family thrown on sister's hands ; pride seals her lips ; hires small room for family ; "steals awhile away" to see them ; does n't invite them to return calls ; stubborn imbecile brother not to be repulsed ; pays his moonlight visits ; sister afraid he'll take to drink ; watches for return of lunacy ; worried to within an inch of her life ; would n't let undersigned help her ; too proud ; would n't let undersigned tell ; undersigned keeps secret till brain's about to burst ; lays the case before adopted sister ; trusts to her womanly tact. The end.

"Yours respectfully,

" "ROBERT RICHARDS HALL." "

There were a few lines added, which Jenny did not read to her mother :

"P. S. Jack has just stepped out of the room for a moment, having seen my letter in the envelope. Before he comes back and I seal it irrevocably, let me hasten to say—without in the least alluding to *our flirtation*, on which subject I know you to be sensitive—that I am true to my colors. Long may they wave ! Fraternally, "BOB."

"Jenny," said Mrs. Stephens, "is it true? Have

you done anything to help them? I have noticed lately that Miss Goodrich looked unusually grave and thoughtful. Poor creature! How many years she has taken care of my home and been a mother to my children, and how little I have ever done for her! Is n't it a shame that this has gone on so long without our knowledge? Bob ought to have told us at once."

"I can manage Goody," said Jenny. "I'm not afraid that I wont be able to get around her pride. But, mamma, I have n't known how to help her. I suppose she principally needs money. I have ached to tell you about it; but I did n't dare worry you when you were sick and had so much on your mind already. And then I have been so busy thinking about you—you know I never can think of more than one thing at a time—and trying to keep up with my lessons while I was out of school, that I have let myself forget it occasionally."

"Go and see her right away. Talk to her yourself, or bring her to me," said her mother.

Jenny found her in her room sewing. "How do you do, Goody?" she said. "It's an age since I've had a chance to speak to you, with everybody's going away and getting sick, and all."

"Come in and sit down, Miss Jenny," said she, clearing a favorite low chair of Jenny's. "The sight of you cheers me up."

"Down in your mind, Goody?" said Jenny gently. "What's the matter?"

"Well, troubles must come to all," said Miss Goodrich indefinitely; "and it's bilious weather."

"You look as yellow as a sunflower," said Jenny. "Eat lemons, Goody, and tell your troubles to your friends. Troubles are not worth having if you can't tell them to your friends; and friends are n't worth having if they won't help you out of them. You've been helping the Stephens family all their lives; but you're one of those stuck-up old things that won't take what you'll give. O Goody, Goody, how you've preached pride down to me ever since I was that high. It's such a naughty sin, Goody. I shall have to punish it out of you the way you used to out of me."

"I choose the baby!" said she, looking up in her eyes and patting her knee; "and you and mamma can fight over the rest. I'll adopt the baby. But maybe there is n't one. Never mind, I'll take the littlest; and you must tell me all their ages and names right away. I'm perishing with curiosity."

Wont it be fun to have children to look after ? we've all been grown up for so long. It will be the making of mamma. Come, Goody, put on your bonnet and let's go and call. I can't wait another minute."

So it came to pass that Miss Goodrich, taken by storm, was as meek and tractable as a lamb. And when she saw how rapidly Mrs. Stephens grew better under the excitement of providing food and raiment and shelter for a little flock, and how much entertainment she found in the children's society, she was almost persuaded to believe what she was continually told—that she conferred greater benefits than she received.

Various plans were proposed, considered, and half adopted, for giving them a home ; but when it suddenly became necessary for the father to be placed in an asylum, it was decided that Mrs. Stephens' house was large enough for another family. There were several unoccupied back rooms ; and in a fortnight from the day when Jenny read Bob's letter to her mother, Mrs. Stephens had two of them fitted up for the pasture of her flock.

The children were Esther, eleven ; Katie, nine ; Jimmy, eight ; and Alice, three.

"My namesake?" said Mrs. Stephens, the first time she saw her, as she snatched the little round thing and cuddled her in her neck. She was one of those bewitching, dumpling babies that everybody instinctively snatches and cuddles.

The children were disposed of in school through the day, excepting Alice, whom they all were glad to have in their way. Out of school hours they had free range of the large back yard. Esther was quite competent to matronize the other three, as she had served for years in the capacity of mother, while their mother was out sewing by the day.

They proved to be very little trouble; and an incalculable blessing to Mrs. Stephens in training her life into new habits. She found few idle hours to tempt her back into old ways; for it took a great deal of time to superintend the garments and other necessities—physical and spiritual—of an adopted family. She would seldom let Miss Goodrich interfere; and would never allow her to feel that they were more hers than theirs.

The undertaking was considered as quixotic as it was astonishing by most of Mrs. Stephens' friends—and quite an unnecessary sacrifice, when there were Homes for the Friendless where the

children could be made comfortable and happy. But Margie and her mother, when addressed on the subject, always replied, that if Mrs. Stephens wished to found, endow and supervise her own Home for the Friendless, they thought it a lovely charity ; and a very pretty tribute to Miss Goodrich's long and faithful service.

It was not many weeks after the adoption that Miss Goodrich received a telegram summoning her to her brother. She was with him only a few hours, when he died, "in his right mind"—so like the brother who had been the pride of her girlhood that she found more comfort in his dying than she had found in all his later years.

Mrs. Stephens' charity had grown too old to be a matter of comment before she spoke to Jenny again about what lay beneath it, at its springs.

Jenny came in from school one afternoon, and went up to her mother's room, opened the door and took a peep. It was very inviting within. There was warmth even in the room's vivid coloring for her tingling cheeks and toes ; and the open fire sent comfortable flashes dancing round the room and over its most tempting article of furniture, a fat child, who rolled on the carpet.

"I was just thinking about you, dear," said Mrs. Stephens. "Do you know that next Sunday will be communion? I am going to my first real sacrament. I think the beginning backwards has succeeded."

"You did n't begin backwards, momley," said Jenny. "You must have loved when you first wanted to. I think that wanting to love is the very beginning of love. Your love has grown big and strong with work—that's all."

"'Yea, Lord,'" said her mother, more as if it were He than Jenny, who sat near her, and to whom she spoke, "'thou knowest that I love thee.'"

"I find plenty of lambs to feed," she said. "Dr. Dana came to me this morning in behalf of some orphan babies; and I have had a letter from a Foundling Asylum. They all seem to understand that my heart goes out most toward the little ones. I don't know whether it's because 'Feed my *Lambs*' is in the same verse with 'Lovest thou me *more*'—as if the charge of the lambs were given especially to those who had had a hard time conquering that word *more*—or because it is an instinct with me to try and atone for neglecting my own children when they were little."

They had not talked a great while longer when they heard a tap at the door, followed by:

"May I come in?"

"Enter, Margie," said Jenny.

Jenny walked down the stairs with her when she went away.

"The pretty mamma gets prettier every day," said Margie. "It's becoming to her to be happy. Does n't it seem wonderful how much brighter you have made life look to her, Tommy?"

"Take all the credit to yourself," said Jenny. "I can trace everything back to our revolutionary days; and you stirred up the revolutions."

"I!" said Margie. "I remember our revolutionary *day*; but I do n't know of more than one; and I'm sure when I began to tone you down you began to tone me up."

"I was n't thinking of that as much as of another," said Jenny. "Have you forgotten how you put it into my head to look for work at home, after I had been waiting three months for something tremendous to come to me from way off?"

"Did I?" said Margie. "I suppose that was because I had always found more than I could do, ready for me at home."

"I used to pine to swing a battle-axe," said Jennie. "Joan of Arc was nothing to what I'd be. You would laugh, Margie, if you could know what big, misty ideas I had about going off big distances to do big things, before you told me that people's homes were the every-day work God had got ready for them. I used to feel as if I lived in a little bit of a world, where there was n't a chance to be bold and brave ; but I've discovered that it is too big for me. The more work I undertake the more I find. The world grows faster than I can keep up with it."

"Of course," said Margie, "there are plenty of great things that people are called far off to do. My idea was that God has every one's work planned ; and that doing the right thing is n't as much a matter of choosing as of obeying. If we're only willing to see, I suppose God will always show us what he has got ready ; and we need n't waste time in looking about. It does seem as if almost every one's work was near home ; but those who are going to be called far off for great things can't prepare better than by doing the little things at home well—can they, Jenny ?"

"Certainly not!" said Jenny. "That speech is

worthy of a doctor of divinity, Prinky; and it expresses my ideas exactly."

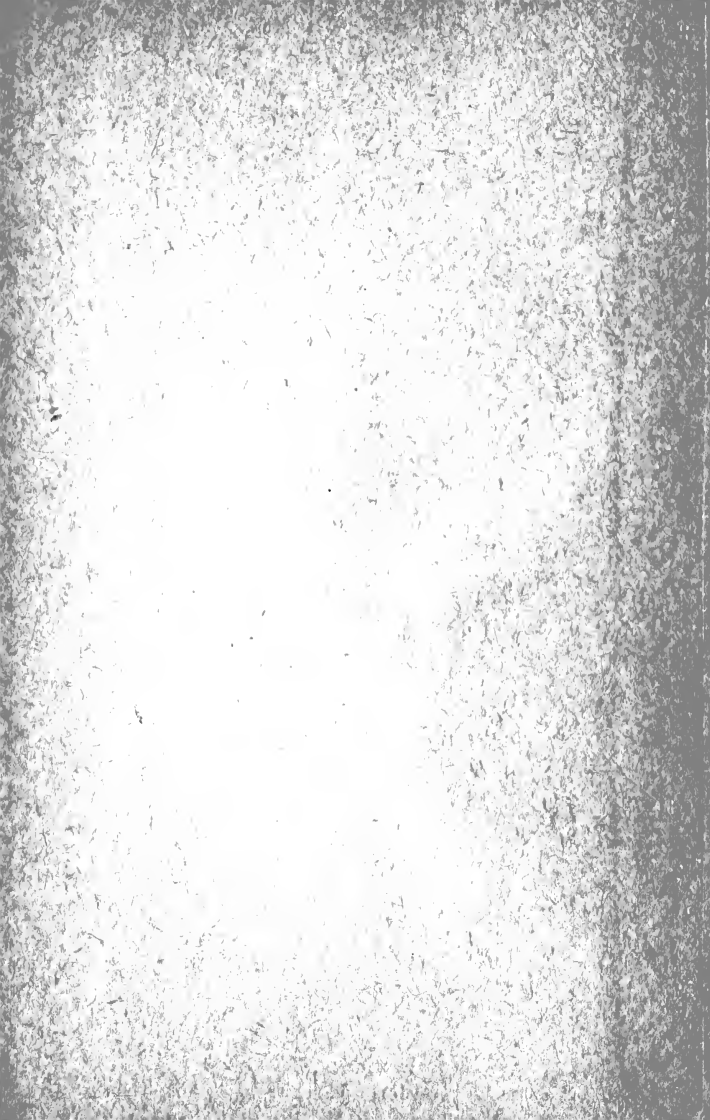
She stood on the piazza with Margie until she was in a chill; and stopping to warm herself by the library fire, she instinctively drew from her pocket, and from its envelope, a letter, which she was in the habit of reading often when she was quiet and alone. It was without signature, but was copied in John's hand-writing:

"When one that was in anxiety of mind, often wavering between fear and hope, did once, being oppressed with grief, humbly prostrate himself in a church before God, in prayer, and said within himself, 'Oh, if I knew that I should yet persevere!' he presently heard within him an answer from God, which said, 'If thou didst know it, what wouldst thou do? Do now what thou wouldst do then, and thou shalt be secure.'

"And being herewith comforted and strengthened, he committed himself wholly to the will of God, and his anxious wavering ceased."

H. M.
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H. G.



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